Hubris

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/49865656.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warnings:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence, Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Categories:	M/M, Other
Fandoms:	Hannibal (TV), Hannibal Lecter Tetralogy - Thomas Harris, Hannibal Rising (2007)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Will Graham's Father, Hannibal Lecter, Mischa Lecter, Beverly Katz, Jimmy Price, Brian Zeller, Matthew Brown (Hannibal), Garrett Jacob Hobbs, Abigail Hobbs, Abel Gideon, Dr. Frederick Chilton, Jack Crawford, Bella Crawford, Peter Bernardone, Randall Tier, Margot Verger, Mason Verger, Freddie Lounds, Elliot Buddish, Francis Dolarhyde, Reba McClane, Franklyn Froideveaux, Tobias Budge, Bedelia Du Maurier, Dr. Cordell Doemling, Chiyoh (Hannibal), Lady Murasaki (Hannibal Rising), Hannibal Lecter's Parents
Additional Tags:	Hannibal Lecter is the Chesapeake Ripper, Hannibal Lecter is a Cannibal, Autistic Will Graham, Forced Eye Contact, Slow Burn, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder - PTSD, Panic Attacks, Implied/Referenced Child Abuse, Homophobia, Suicidal Thoughts, Graphic Description of Corpses, Blood and Gore, Implied/Referenced Torture, Emotional Manipulation, BDSM, Praise Kink, Humilation Kink, Rough Sex, Anal Sex, Oral Sex, Love Bites, Top Hannibal Lecter, Power Bottom Will Graham, Service Top Hannibal Lecter, Sassy Will Graham, Will Graham is a Little Shit, Possessive Hannibal Lecter, worshipping, Hannibal Lecter Takes Care of Will Graham, Angst and Fluff and Smut, References to Depression, Character Sickness, Canonical Character Death, Selective Mutism, Will Graham and Hannibal Lecter in Love, Dark Will Graham, Switch Hannibal Lecter
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2023-09-04 Updated: 2023-12-05 Words: 23,277 Chapters: 4/?

Hubris

by Deheven27

Summary

Hannibal's knees gave out, he kneeled onto the cold frost biting snow. The snow fell onto him, the cold chain around his neck dragged onto the floor. He was lost in the open, the young boy's fate undecided. The shouts of the soldiers rang through the sky, he let himself be captured.

New Orleans was insufferably cold, especially for will. He laid crumpled on a snow pile near a dumpster. He hugged his small frame weakly. He was hungry, tired and frozen. He was waiting for his father. He never returned to collect Will.

Esoteric

Chapter Notes

Hi guys! This is my first work on AO3 so please be patient with me while, I still get the hang of things :) I'd appreciate any tips at all! I'm following the NBC Hannibal timeline, combined with a few details from Hannibal rising as well as red dragon. The chapters will mostly follow the episode format in a way but ill flip flop it in ways that I want. I'll try to update when I can. Thanks for reading!!

Disclaimer:

Most of my dialogue loosely follows the dialougue from Hannibal but I don't copy it word for word, I make my own dialogue basically. On occasion I do use exact same dialogue if I feel it's a really good line or necessary for the plot.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The cold had numbed the heavy chain around his neck, it had frozen to his skin. The end of the long and heavy chain dragged along the floor leaving a snake-like line through the snow. Lithuania, his birth country, was amidst the bone chilling winter. Hannibal hadn't known how long he had been trudging through the snow. His feet were blue and frosted, his face pale with a slick, thin layer of frost. His sandy blonde hair was significantly brightened by the snow piled onto his head. All he knew was that he had to keep *moving*. If he stopped he would *freeze* to **death**. Stopping would also mean he could be *caught* by whatever he was running from again. His memory was very hazy, he could only remember the bits and details. It had been as if he had woken up from a trance as soon as he had been able to run away from his family's cabin in the woods. A part of him was *missing*, the piece *lost* at some point during the time he had been held captive at the cabin. But all that mattered was that the boy had to keep *continuing* on.

He was far from the cabin by now, it was a speck of dust in the horizon when Hannibal had turned his head to look. The clothes that hung on his body seemed like they had once been *luxurious*. But the time and the winter had worn them down to rags, he was having a hard time trying to keep warm with them. His hands fastened behind his back throbbed as per usual, he couldn't *free* himself. At least not with any help, but he was obviously all alone in the wilderness. The soft crunch of the snow under his feet, the bare branches that stretched out from the tall trees made no sound. It had almost been as if time had stopped in the snowy environment, everything was frozen in a way.

Hannibal was soothed by the stillness and tranquility. Hannibal knew a lot more than any child his age should know. He knew that if he were to perish here, he would be preserved in ice and snow. He had seen it happen to his parents when they died. He also knew that he would serve as nutrients to the wild life and earth that belonged to the forest. He knew that

the wolves or the bears would *consume* him, they did after all *eat* his parents. He had tried his best before to ward them off but at the end it had no avail, they were **gone** anyways.

He was willing to admit the possibilities of him *dying*, but something *knacked* at him. Something within him **seethed**, and **boiled**. He knew that it wasn't going to be an option for him to die here. Something fueled his ***hunger***, the ***insatiable need to consume***. His resolve was fueled, he had a **purpose**, he couldn't quite tell what it was just yet. But he would find out eventually, he had to *survive*. His shaky breath seemed like smoke every time he exhaled. The air that he sucked into his lungs made his lungs feel as if they were being *stabbed* by glass. Hannibal knew he was *sick*, he believed that it had been a case of pneumonia. He coughed loudly as he trekked further into the forest.

He stumbled onto a hidden path. The isolation of the path would make anyone believe that this path had been untouched for many years. Hannibal didn't pay much attention to it anyways, he dragged himself down the path. The path was slippery and icy, it burned Hannibal's feet as he did his best to push through all the brambles as well as branches head first. The path was rocky, steep, and dangerous. One wrong step and Hannibal can go tumbling down the side of the mountain. He had been lost before, but now he followed the path, it would lead him to something. May life be at the end of the path or swift death, he would know in due time. The path was long and trees lined it. The shadows of the trees casted down at Hannibal as he went farther and farther.

Hannibal had noticed that the more ahead he had gone the more the trees had begun to clear. The elevation of the path was starting to drop to more flat ground. He was tired, he knew that soon he would collapse. His lungs screamed as he pushed himself towards the end of the path. The trees diminished even more, a smooth flat clearing appeared. Hannibal had made it to the center of the forest. Suddenly loud mechanical sounds shattered the pacific that belonged to the forest. Loud squeals and thumps rang against the floor of the forest.

Hannibal's eyes widened at the unexpected sight in front of him. A large russian tank without rubber wheeling squealed as it got closer to hannibal. Both the tank and Hannibal continued towards the middle of the frigid clearing. Hannibal could finally hear the violent shouts from the Russian soldiers, unexpectedly bullets rang out and shot past Hannibal. The speed of the bullets made whistling sounds. Hannibal continued to stagger towards the tank. The bullets were getting closer and closer to Hannibal.

The Bullets stopped at the shout of a Russian commander. The tank squealed to a stop, a Russian commander had spotted Hannibal. He saw that he was a young boy, maybe around possibly eight years old. His appearance was rattling, he was very thin and pale. His eyes had sunk in a bit and he was frosted by a thin layer of ice. Even with all the shadows on his face, his piercing maroon eyes managed to stand out. All he wore were rags that inherently hadn't done much of a job of keeping him warm. But the worst part of the child's appearance had been the thick metal collar around his neck, along with the heavy chain that dragged behind him. He had no free-use of his hands either; they were bound behind him.

Hannibal's legs gave out, he kneeled onto the icy snow that sent jolts of pain from the cold to Hannibal's legs. He had no way to protect himself, his hands still fastened behind him. He

gave himself up to the soldiers, his shoulders slumped in defeat. He looked up into the clear sky, as more snow had begun to fall down. In that moment he too was a snowflake. He was lifted up into the sky by the harsh sudden winds. One could never know where a snowflake might flutter, and one knew even less to where it could possibly land. Fate was unpredictable that way.

****Hubris******

New Orleans in the winter was unforgivable for the less fortunate. The small town near the ports of the sea was densely populated. Poverty had stricken the area, there wasn't quite much to fish in the winter. It was a harsh environment to raise a family, especially if you didn't have *enough* money to feed your family. Jobs were scarce and everyone was struggling. Will had aimlessly followed his father anywhere might he go. Both him and Will were originally from Louisiana. The warm winters compared to New Orleans were more tolerable, more easily manageable.

Will missed the stability of his old home in Louisiana. He missed when both his mom and dad were together. He missed the love they had for each other, the love that had created Will. All gone now, nothing but a haunting memory in the light of day. A long shadow stretching behind Will, always there looming behind him. People say it's hard to forget the moments in which you felt most safe. His father fell to alcoholism and aimless wanderings wherever he might find work near the port of the sea. He was a good fisherman, and an even better mechanic. He could fix any boat motor, no matter the amount of disrepair it may be in. But, all the hard work and passion slipped when his wife had left him. He was merely a ghost within a shell. Will missed his father, he was angry he had been too caught up in self-pity that he had forgotten Will's love and admiration. He forgot to love Will, he forgot his son.

Will was also angry at his mom. How could she leave home with such a broken man? Where did the love for him go? When did Will stop being her blue eyed baby? Her lovely sweet boy. When was the moment when she had stopped whispering sweet nothings into his ear as he would drift to sleep, tucked safely into his bed as she cooed and petted his hair lovingly. When had the outline of his father watching the two from Will's bedroom door as he leaned in with a soft smile disappear? When was the moment that the two of them decided they no longer loved each other? When was the moment the two decided they had stopped loving Will?

He remembered the night his mom had left. He remembered that before he had gone to bed his parents had been arguing. Will had learned to tuck himself in by then. He learned to pet his own hair soothingly. He learned to be quiet when he cried. His shaky sobs silent, mirroring the soft rustles of the outside winds. He missed his mom, he missed his dad. He would close his eyes at one point and just listen to his parents argue. That night Will's mom had softly creeped up to his room. Will could differentiate the different sounds of feet, he knew his mom had stopped in front of his door. He had also heard the soft squeals of a suitcase along the hardwood floor. Her soft feet padded along the wood, a rustle of a pair of shoes clinking together. She had taken off her shoes and was only in her socks. She softly pushed open the door of his room.

Will laid still, the sounds of his soft breath filling the room. She was about to step in, reaching out her hand. But she stopped, and leaned onto the door instead. She watched him for a total of five minutes. Will struggled to keep his breath even and steady. He was awake, he knew she was leaving. But, he couldn't bring himself to wake up and beg her not to leave. And just like that she sighed quietly and shut his door with a soft push. She had decided that Will hadn't been worth the effort to stay, or even take with her. She had slipped on her heels after she had closed the door. She walked down the hall with her heels clicking alarmingly loud. The suitcase squealed loudly. She slammed the front door behind her and never looked back. Will had scrambled to see her through his window on the second floor. He saw her wave to the bright yellow taxi, slamming the door behind her. He kept watching until it had become only a yellow speck on the horizon. She was gone.

Will peered into the bakery window on his tippy toes. His cheeks were pink from the cold and bits of frost ran rampant all over his hair. Will was small and underweight for his age, but it didn't stop him from being resourceful and clever. His warm breath trembled as he tried his hardest not to breathe onto the window lest he dirty it. He kept his hands in the thin, ratty sweater riddled with holes that he used to keep himself warm. No matter the amount of times he had patched up the holes, new ones would appear just as quickly. This caused a singular finger of his to always escape out of the hole in his pocket.

His stomach rumbled, mouth watering, as he saw the baker pull out a fresh batch of beignets. He saw how the baker lightly sprinkled powdered sugar over on top of the beignets. He then took out some honey and drizzled it over the top of the pastries. Will leaned a little closer to the window to get a better view of the beignets. He had been waiting in front of the bakery because his father told him to.

"Wait here like a good boy, Will. You know that they don't allow kids *like you* into bars." his father tousled his hair lightly.

Will nodded slightly, his eyes pasted onto the floor as he fumbled with the hole in his pocket. Without a warning, the ruffling had turned into a hard *yank*. Will's eyes trembled as he was forced to look into his father's eyes. Eye contact made Will extremely *uncomfortable*, his father knew it did. He could never quite understand why his father kept *forcing* him to make eye contact when he knew how much it had really *disturbed* Will.

"**Look at me Will**. Do you *understand* that you have to *wait* here? Do **not** come looking for me in the bar. Do **not** walk up to the bar, don't even cross this street over to the bar. I can't afford to get kicked out of a bar *again* because of *your* fault. If I get kicked out of this one, you'll wish you had stayed and done what I told you to." his father hissed as he leaned down and whispered coldly at Will.

Will gulped and nodded obediently. He wouldn't go looking for his father this time. The grip on Will's hair loosened once his father deemed Will's response as proper. He smiled down at Will, his crooked yellow teeth blaring down looking sickly. The street lamps made his father look scarier than Will had liked. Like a mirror Will made sure to smile back sweetly, almost as if he had understood what his father had asked of him. The man gave Will a pat, he then shuffled across the street and into the bright bar. Without his father still being there Will had been the only person out on the streets that time of day. He doubted anyone else would be

stupid enough to wait outside, especially a day as cold as today. It had already been four hours since Will had been waiting for his father.

He turned back to look at the beignets, if only he could just have one. Will leaned into the glass, his small hands plastering against the window to keep himself from falling. His hands stuck to the glass immediately as the glass had been very cold. Will didn't mind the frosty sting that spread across his palms. He wished he could live in the bakery, that he could bake and eat all those yummy pastries. Will's mind ran wild, he imagined what it would be like to bake as well as eating what he had made. He would work hard to run his bakery. Will could see himself softly kneading dough. Will's imagination was vivid as if almost Will had gone to the future where he did become a baker. The beautiful dreams wound in Will's head immediately shattered with the aggressive jingle of the bakery door. The glass door lurched forward, the sounds of angry steps made their way over to Will.

A large hand landed on Will's small wrist and he was yanked away from the window. Will hissed in pain, the action had caused a thin layer of his skin that was stuck to the window to rip off. Will was dangling in the air by his wrist, his eyes widened in fear as he refused to look at the large man in the eyes. The faint smell of powdered sugar and honey attacked Will's nose.

"What did I say about touching my glass?! You got it dirty again, you nasty little street rat.You're nothing but white trash ruining hard working businesses like mine. I don't understand how they could possibly let a rat like you run around this town so freely. I ought to teach your rat daddy a lesson on keeping his baby rat on a tight leash." he yanked Will along behind him.

Will fought against the man planting his tattered shoes along the frozen pavement to stop him from moving. Any words Will had in his mouth died, he hadn't said anything in years since his mom left him. But the man just yanked him higher into the air and Will had given up at that point. His head fell downwards to watch the moving pavement. He dangled like a rag doll limply. He was taken into the alley way in between the bakery and the other building. He was thrown ruthlessly into a wet pile of snow near the dumpster. The baker huffed, wiping his hands in disgust on his flour covered apron. Will heard him walk back into the bakery and the door slammed shut with a loud jingle.

Will lay crumpled into the cold snow, he had held his breath the whole time until he knew the baker had gone back inside. He let out a choked sob, it wasn't like Will to make any noise. Tears streamed down from his baby blue eyes, his hair was a tousled mess, his already rag like clothes more wrinkled than before. His face was bright pink from the frost and anger. He was cold, tired, and hungry. The moon seemed to hang brightly over his head. It looked almost blue tonight compared to the dark black night. A snowflake fluttered down and landed onto his cheek before melting immediately into the warm tears on Will's cheeks. More and more began to fall, sprinkling onto Will as if he were a beignet himself. His father didn't return to get him that night.

****Hubris******

Will jolted awake with an imaginable amount of cold coursing through his body. He shivered violently as his breathing was shallow and sharp. He couldn't breathe right, he touched his face with clammy cold hands. Warm tears had moistened his cheeks. He hugged his heavy blankets closer to himself for warmth. He had a nightmare about when he was younger in New Orleans with his father. All of the memories had rushed into his head unwillingly. He remembers he had slept outside that night, he remembers waking up to a pile of snow over him. The only reason he had even managed to survive was because of a stray dog that he had held close for warmth.

They had both saved each other's lives, they kept each other warm in the record breaking cold. The soft fur of the shaggy stray seemed to match Will's hair exactly, they both shared blue eyes. Will had walked around looking for his father that morning with the stray in tow. From then on the two became inseparable, and he had indeed found his father in the nearby police station. His father had been brought in for causing a disruption in the bar, and he had been banned permanently. Will waited at the police station for his father to be released. It would have been better if his father had stayed there. Because as soon as both of them were out of the station's sight, his father had punished Will for moving from the spot he had told Will to stay at. He still remembers having one of his teeth knocked out by his dad, but luckily enough little kids' teeth grow back really fast.

Winston, the newest addition to Will's pack, nudged Will's arm softly with his cold wet nose. He reminded Will of the dog that had saved him. Maybe that had been also part of the reason why he had picked up so many strays. He had been trying to pay forth the help that stray had given him. Winston jumped onto the bed nosing his way in between Will's arms. Will obliged and wrapped his arms around the dog and cuddled into him. He pet his fur lovingly, it was smooth and soft underneath Will's calloused fingers. Will looked over to his right, the digital clock read four a.m. Will snuggled into Winston's fur and his eyes drooped sleepily. He drifted back to sleep, he was warm now.

Chapter End Notes

Wow, this is a sad snippet :(. I kind of teared up writing this chapter the first time around ha ha ha ha ha ha-sigh....

Amenable

Chapter Notes

> Sorry for the wait! I managed to get a hold of my docs finally! Chapter 3 will unfortunately still need to be posted until probably this coming Sunday or Monday. I am very sorry for the wait! Please enjoy! Thanks for the kuddos, I really appreciate it!! I love you my lovely readers!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The howls of multiple dogs rang through the dark home that belonged to Will. He had jolted awake a bit sluggish from the lack of sleep. His listless gaze fell onto his digital clock as he had rolled to face it. He was late. He jumped up, frantically looking for a clean pair of pants and shirt. He yanked on a pair of jeans, along with a flannel shirt, he grabbed his already tied tie sliding it up close to his neck. He slipped on a gray coat over his outfit, reaching out for his satchel on the lazyboy recliner in his living room. He knew that his mistake had cost him the opportunity to eat breakfast, but he knew he'd survive. Will did grow up being hungry. He ran out his front door locking it behind him. Running up to his car Will's reflection had bounced off the window. He noticed that his hair was rampant, he groaned, he hadn't had time to at least run a comb through it much less smooth it down with water. But, at last he jumped into his sky blue volvo, he was already late to his lecture at Quantico. He sped through the dirt road sending huge gusts of dirt into the air. Thank goodness no police patrolled the isolated area, he thought.

Yesterday, he had decided to give a lecture on the scene of the murder of Mr. and Mrs. Marlow. He stood in the middle of the his classroom, his breath hitched. The pendulum swung back and forth with an eerily ambient sound. ***Whoosh whoosh whoosh***. He had been stalking the Marlows from across the street. He was waiting, watching….he was patient and meticulous. He had planned this out. He saw Mrs. Marlow shuffle around near the front entrance. He casually strutted across the street, he was hyping himself up. The soles of his feet touched the stairs of the porch, power in his legs jolted up as he sped up. He barged into the home by kicking in the door, he had his pistol already out pointed toward the stairs. Mr. Marlow quickly stumbled down the stairs dressed in his sleepwear. Before he had time to call out two shots rang out perfectly lodging into Mr. Marlows neck as his body was thwarted backwards from the impact. Blood streaked the wall almost as if it were a gash, his body slipped down the stairs limply and he laid at the base of the stairs.

He would witness what would happen to his wife, he was paralyzed. Mrs. Marlow's sharp gasps and cries of frantic fear echoed in the home. She fumbled with the irritating, loud beeps that sounded from the home security system. She barely had time to crane her neck, before more shots rang out again lodging into her neck. She fell over immediately, she wouldn't be able to make a single move but would feel the pain coursing through her. She would bleed to death before she could receive any help. He pulled out his phone, pressed the keypad,

answering to an operator from the security company, Mrs. Marlow's voice pealed throughout the dead silent home after he pressed play on the recording. The security operator hung up assured that this had been another accidental set off of the alarm, just like there had been last week. He walked away after staring at both of Marlows' flaccid bodies. He escaped.

Will's vision focused as he breathed sharply, he had finished his seminar. All of the eager students stared at him. Focusing on every single word, barely on the edges of their seats. Will's eyes plaster down at his feet as he tries to soothe his heat rate down to a normal rate.

"Tell me your design, tell who you are. Tell me why they deserved this" Will walked back to his stand. The students dismissed themselves and dispersed from the lecture room. They all stared in awe of him.

A man in a dark suit creeped slowly into the lecture room. He had an extremely wide and sturdy build. He looked like a brick wall, he was most likely trained in self-defense. His disciplined, dark brown eyes fell onto Will, they were a very calculating set of eyes. The man finally built up the courage to walk up to Will. Not that it even seemed like he needed it, he was possibly thinking of other opportunities. Will's eyes slightly widened a bit at the sight of the man, he was very large but at most two inches taller than him. He had recognized who the man was, Jack Crawford, one of the men who was in charge of opening the *Evil Minds Research Museum*. Also in charge of naming the museum such a ridiculous name. The name was on the roof of his mouth because he refused to say such a distasteful name.

"Will Graham? I'm FBI agent Jack Crawford, head of the Behavioral Science Unit here at Quantico." Crawford extended his hand towards Will.

Will ignored the man's outstretched hand and opted for organizing his stand. He put together folders and papers filing them into his respected files into his satchel. He was organized in his way even if it wasn't apparent to the naked eye. Will had a routine and he would not let an outsider interrupt it.

"I know, you came up with that god awful name." scoffed Will as he rubbed the bridge of his nose with his fingers. He felt like he was drained from so much human interaction already.

"I believe *The Evil Minds Museum* was a proper name for such a museum" Crawford was amused at Will's lack of approval for the name.

"That's interesting, I don't think I mentioned wanting your opinion on the name. Need I remind you about our disagreement during your grand opening?" Will turned his gaze up to the projected murder of the Marlows. He turned off the projector with his remote.

"I don't think we need to get into that as of now. I see you started teaching since then, despite your apparent tendency to lack motivation to socialize with anyone." Crawford closed the distance between the two. He leaned onto Will's stand, Will looked a bit peeved at the action but he ignored it.

"There is no need to socialize if they just stay quiet and listen to me speak. I'll only stick to rhetorical questions as well. So in all they won't ever need to answer either." Will's words got a bit stuck at "socialize", so he muttered out the rest.

Crawford reached out to push up Will's glasses that were barely hanging onto the tip of his nose at this point. Will quickly maneuvered, turning around yet again away from Crawford's reach. He pushed up his own glasses.

"So, get to the point, agent Crawford. Let's not waste any of each other's time by beating around the bush. Why are you paying me a visit today?" Will turned to face Crawford's direction, but he made sure to keep his eyes trained on the other man's black leather shoes. He fumbled nervously with the ends of his coat.

"What area of the autistic spectrum do you fall on?" Crawford asked.

"I've been told that I border on aspergers and autism. But Aspergers is now an outdated term with not the best background either. Being connected to a nazi doctor who would send children with autism to be euthanized in concentration camps. He coined the name ironically. I identify more with having autism, though this has been a recent change. Not many people are aware of it yet. The spectrum of autism is wide and not exclusive to a certain demonstration of symptoms. Most individuals with autism have varying symptoms and needs." Will was a bit out of breath from his ramble but composed himself quickly.

"I see." Crawford was a bit lost in thought from the access amount of information Will had relayed to him.

"Yeah." Will said awkwardly.

"So you emphasize with these serial killers?" inquired Crawford.

"Just as much as I can with anybody." Will fidgeted with his hands nervously. He hung his satchel over his shoulder, hugging it close to himself. He felt a bit more secure.

"So that means you have the great ability to imagine right?" Crawford raised an eyebrow.

"W-well, I do-" Will stammered, he was interjected.

"Can I borrow your ability to imagine?" Crawford leaned close into Will's personal space.

"I guess." sighed will.

"Alright, follow me, I'll brief you on the way." Crawford made his way out the room.

Will followed close behind, shutting off the lights of the lecture room, locking the door with his key. Crawford was already down the hall. Will ran behind him and Crawford started speaking

"We have girls from Minnesota campuses, 8 in total missing." said Crawford.

"Are you saying they are only missing because your team cannot efficiently find them? Plus weren't there 7?" scoffed Will.

"Well, we don't have much to go off. There has been no traces left behind not even an eyelash." said Crawford, a bit annoyed by Will's accusation.

“Where do you think all those girls are then? I’m sure you know that they weren’t just kidnapped.” Will questioned.

“That’s what you're here to help me find out.” Crawford held out the door to the BSU entrance. Will walked in, Crawford handed him a file and stuck a photo of a girl to the bulletin board.

“We just had the eighth occur before I picked you up.” Crawford sighs.

Will flips through the file labeled Elise Nichols. He looks at Crawford for more knowledge, so he explains to Will that she had been on her way to her parents house to house and pet sit before she had disappeared before arriving. Will intent on understanding every detail listens cautiously.

“You don’t obviously believe any of these other girls could be alive don't you?” Will asks genuinely.

“No, I do not. We’ll focus on Elise Nichols, she’d sure as hell have more of a chance than the other could by now” grimily speaks Crawford. He expressed himself with his hands, he was an expressive man.

“All these girls share the same appearance,” Will looks at the sea of girls who all looked as if they had all been clones somehow. His heart aches.

“What do you think ties them all together Will?” Crawford stares at the sea of girl’s his eyes unfaltering with burning justice.

“It’s not all at all about all these girls. It’s about one and only one girl. We have to find out who she is, she is the prize that needs to be won before the serial killer we have on our hands.” Will bites his nail nervously as he stares off into thought.

“I need you to investigate more Will. I need more than just this information." Crawford had caught Will as he had already been inching his way over to the door

“I’m sure you’ve more than enough help. Heck, I'm sure you could find better help than I could be.” Will continued inching towards the door.

“Will, I don’t need anyone else. I need you. It’s your imagination, your skills. Help me catch the killer, Will. Don’t let any other girls die.”

“Are you referring to how I make impulsive conclusions?”

“Will, any other person wouldn’t be able to connect the dots quite like you. No one can connect them like you can either.”

“I-I don’t make “impulsive conclusions”, I use what’s there. Maybe if you trained your agents better they could make better connections. You know, better conclusions?”

“My agents are trained well, they don’t have the privilege of having such abilities as yours.”

“My ability isn’t a privilege, it’s more like a curse.” Will sighs, raking his hands through his curly hair in frustration.

“Then use that curse to find me more evidence. Use it to save more people from falling victim to these serial killers.”

“That will force me to co-mingle with the humanities.” Will deadpans.

“Will…” Crawford grits his teeth.

“Fine.”

********Hubris********

The two arrived at the Nichols’ home. They questioned Elise’s parents. The two were still very distraught and not much help, answering with what they had already offered to prior police force. Will notices the quiet cat as it rubs against his legs, purring for attention. Will liked cats but not as much as he liked dogs.

“Did you guys feed the cat?” mumbled Will.

“Excuse me?” Mrs. Nichols sniffed through tears.

“Did you feed the cat?”

“No”

“Why isn’t it meowing then? It should be meowing hungrily.”

“I’m not sure.”

“Where is Elise’s room?”

“You can’t possibly find anything else the police already investigated in her room. We are sick and tired of our privacy, no Elise’s privacy being violated like this. We are sick of questions. We just want to grieve already.” Mr. Nichols groaned his face within the palms of his hands.

“I asked where her room is.” Will asked, a bit peeved.

“Will…ask more with more reverence.” seethed Crawford.

“May you please kindly direct me to your daughter’s room so graciously Mr. Nichols?” Will said in faux politeness.

“It’s down the hall. Agent Crawford, I suppose your agents aren't always this rude?” he glared at Will.

“He’s a field consultant, not an agent.” Crawford also glared at Will.

Will paid no attention to the two, walking briskly down the hall towards Elise's bedroom. The cat clawed at the door, Will took a pair of rubber gloves and put them on. He couldn't risk accidentally contaminating the scene if he were to find something. He finally turned the knob, slowly pushing the door open. A breeze hit him, gently the white see-through curtains fluttered, lifted by the outside breeze. The window was open, the moon's light shined through hitting the bed. It wasn't till Will's gaze had met the end of the moon's light that he had noticed a white night dress. There on top of the bed lay a young woman, brown hair, pale skin. This was Elise and she had been placed back into her bed. Will stood there still for a moment, somewhat stunned at the new occurrence. Crawford, now finished from speaking with the Nichols, had made his way to join Will at the door. He peaked over Will's shoulder, he immediately took out his phone and dialed into the phone.

"I'm going to need a forensic team to go to Nichols' home. I want Beverly Katz and the others on this immediately." He spoke into the phone.

"What do you mean by forensic team?!" Mr. Nichols looked past Will, "E-Elise…?!" he saw her body on her bed and pushed his way through Will before Will had yanked him back into the hall.

"Don't contaminate the area! I know you want to see her…I know. But if you contaminate this crime scene we'll lose valuable information we could use to catch her murderer." Will shook his head almost pleading Mr. Nichols to stop.

"Ok…I understand…it's just…my girl…my little princess…she's dead." Mr. Nichols let out a croaked sob.

Will was hit by the wash of empathy, he hugged Mr. Nichols. Even if he hated the feeling of having to touch others, he knew Mr. Nichols needed the support. He held the other man as he sobbed into his shirt. He patted his back soothingly, he was almost moved by the pain in Mr. Nichols's suffering. He almost shed a few tears before he had been pulled away by Crawford and Mr. Nichols had found refuge in Mrs. Nichols's arms afterwards. The two hugged bound by the agony of losing their only daughter. They held onto each other for comfort and sobbed into each other's necks.

****Hubris*****

"Will, I need you to do your best here."

"I-I'm trying my best Crawford. I really am." Will looked at Elise's still body nervously.

"You need to do your "thing", Will."

"Fine, I need quiet." He raked his hands through his hair nervously.

Crawford stood there quietly. He looked at Will a bit amused.

"That means I have to be alone!"

Crawford put up his hands in faux offense before clicking his tongue on the roof of his mouth. He glared at Will, "You better do well. Or I'll keep babysitting you."

Will looked taken aback by Crawford. He fumbled nervously with the bottom of his flannel with his fingers. His fumbling turned into him gripping his shirt until his knuckles turned white. "Well..are you leaving?" He looked pissed.

Crawford made his way to the door, he slammed it behind him with a huff and grumble. Will looked at Elise, he breathed in and out. He closed his eyes, the bright orange pendulum seemed to light up underneath his eye lids. It swung back and forth with an ambient noise. ***Whoosh whoosh whooshh***.

He opened his eyes. He was standing near the open window next to Elise's bed. She laid asleep, breathing softly. Her hands curled near her face, just like a baby would. He watched her, he could feel the girlish innocence. His heart warmed and melted a bit at the sight of her sleeping so soundly. She was so lovely, so perfect, his love for her deep rooted. Something snapped in him once he realized something. He stood still, very still. All you could hear was Elise's soft breathing as it rang out the room.

Suddenly, he pounced on her landing knee first. He felt her ribs snap underneath the pressure, the air knocked out of her lungs prevented her from screaming. And even then once she was able to recover his hands were on her throat before she had seen it coming. Her eyes bulged, frightened, his grip tightened. And just like that in a few moments she had stopped breathing permanently. Much like a candle that was snuffed out by perilous winds, her life force had been taken from her. He picked her up, her head leaned onto his shoulder. He cradled her close like one would with their sleeping child, and he took her with him.

Will's eyes snapped open. He breathed hard as his hands went flying to his face as he felt it frantically. His face felt the same, his fast paced breath slowed as he forced himself to breath in and out deeply.

"Wow, that's some gift of yours." Chimed a slim woman with raven black hair.

Will's head snapped into her direction. His eyes wide with anger. "I told Crawford that when I'm working, no one can bother me.."

"Hey, hey..no need to freak out." The woman held out her gloved hand as the other held a camera.

"You don't understand how it makes me feel. It's like my privacy, no my mind is being invaded." His hands cradled his face.

"Look, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make you feel unsafe. My name is Beverly Katz, I'm on the forensic team. I just had to take another look. I found deer velvet in one of the punctures on her abdomen. I needed a second look."

"I understand…but don't do it ever again." He sighed defeatedly.

"Anyways, I see you have no FBI badge."

"They didn't let me in..you have to pass the psych evaluation."

"The psych evaluation helps determine your capability to be on the field. Detects unstableness, you unstable?" She looked at Will, eyes filled with curiosity.

"In our defense we told her not to go back in because Crawford said we weren't allowed back in yet." Chirped a man with blue eyes and brunette hair.

"Yeah, we tried to..but…man she's too strong. And I'm too scared to fight her." Piped up a blonde blue eyed man.

Will groaned louder as the two peaked in from the door, they probably saw and heard Will more than he'd like. The two took the groan as an invite in, the waltzed in unaffected by Will's piercing glare.

"What's the commotion here?! Will?!" Yelled Crawford.

"Well I was interrupted here!" Will offers.

"I'm pretty sure you were done with your vision when you opened your eyes and acknowledged me." Retorted Katz.

"We were just here to supervise Beverly!" The blonde and brunette duo harmoniously spoke.

"Will, what did you see?" Crawford sternly asked.

"He respected her. He was deeply infatuated with her. Not in a deviant way, more in a platonic way? He didn't want her to suffer much. He pounced and killed her quickly. He was strong, he broke some ribs by jumping on her knee first."

"What do you mean he loved her? Respect? He didn't leave any sexual marks, nothing." Crawford was taken aback with Will's view.

"Crawford, love can transcend from sexual desire. He loved her in a different way..more in a paternal way. This was an apology. He was thinking with mercy when he brought her back here instead of dumping her somewhere."

"We should take her back to the lab, we can find more there than we can here now." Beverly inserted herself into their discussion.

"Fine. Let's do that." Crawford agreed.

****Hubris*****

"So you found the deer velvet in her puncture wounds?" Will asked.

"Yes, but I'm still trying to figure out why it was there." Beverly sighs.

"You know, deer velvet has healing properties. He might have been trying to make her feel better. Like I said he was apologizing for killing her?" Will spoke well versed in knowledge of deers he knew.

"Doesn't quite explain why she has puncture wounds that seem to have come from Deer antlers. He also sewed her back together here at her abdomen. He took her liver and put it back in? What kind of guy takes something and takes it back?" Beverly is stuck in thought.

The three forensic members, Beverly, the blonde named Jimmy Price, and the brunette named Brian all crowded around Elise's body. They were digging into her body's organs

"She couldn't have been fighting before with a deer." said Brian.

“I mean how else could she get these punctures if she hadn’t been rammed by one?” Jimmy cocked an eyebrow.

The three were stuck in thought. Will was also deep in thought. He knew the killer honored this girl, but why did he sew her liver back in? What was different from her? Why had the others disappeared with no traces but Elise had reappeared completely intact. The realization loomed over him, and it took him by an unwanted storm. He staggered back a bit and leaned on the wall of the forensic lab. He was forced to shut his eyes, he saw Elise suspended into the air before she was punctured by the deer antlers. The most peculiar thing was that she was left to hang there as the red blood from her body drained. He was draining her of blood. He was treating her like a hunted animal, like game perhaps. And Will was pretty sure the man would eat her, he wouldn’t let her go to waste. But that was before he found something from her. Something he didn’t like. Will opened his eyes, he breathed quietly. He looked around glad that no one had noticed.

“He took out her liver right?” he asked.

“Yeah, and sewed it back in.” Price looked at the liver.

“He was eating them.” Will sighed. “Check her liver closer, that’s probably the reason why he couldn’t eat her.

“She had liver cancer.” Brian aghast looked at the other two forensic members.

“That’s why the other girls disappeared, he erased their Dna piece by piece. Meal by meal, as horrific as it sounds. He was put off by her liver cancer. He would have never had killed her if he knew it had been cancerous, that’s why he was sorry for killing her and wasting her. He sewed her back up and tucked her back into bed as an apology. He put red velvet into her wounds so that she would heal, but in reality she was dead already.” concluded Will.

“Wow, I see why Crawford was smart enough to have dragged you out onto the field.” Whistled Katz in admiration.

“More overbearing and irritating than intelligent to me.” frowned Will.

“Aw, cheer up buttercup! Your help is much appreciated. Jack may be an asshole, but he is a well meaning one. He just wants to save lives.”

“If he hadn’t been so obsessed with justice, he’d see that I am just as invested in saving lives as he is. But, he is making this miserable for me, and that’s not ok.”

Speaking of the devil, Crawford had waltzed in without missing a beat. He seemed quite angry as his gaze fell onto Will first and then moved onto everyone else.

“What did you find Will?” he demanded.

Will explained what they had found. The others offered their input, and their own observations.

“What am I supposed to do with the information regarding this killer being a cannibal?!” angerily seethed Crawford. He was appalled at the killer.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter had a crap ton of dialogue! It was a bit annoying but the others will also have dialogue. I hope you guys are looking forward for more! Love ya my lovelies. <3 <3

Specious

Chapter Summary

will likes his house, car, and dogs

Chapter Notes

Hello my lovely readers! The wait is over :) Sorry for dying for a moment. These past weeks i've been super busy so i'm very sorry i've only had time to recently post again. Please enjoy this arguably long chapter writing it was at least SOB. You're in for a few surprises and funny laughs. Buckle up!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will had just left Quantico late into the night. The drive was long to Wolf trap but it was peaceful and quiet. The car's tires lurched through the dirt road, his Volvo slightly shook along the dusty road. He was all alone out here in the night. He was tired. Soon the headlights of his Volvo shined onto his dimly lit home. He parked and hopped out his car, grabbing his satchel. He dragged himself up his porch steps up to the door. He unlocked the door and turned the knob, it wasn't long till the door had been pushed open by Will's pack of dogs.

He was greeted by the wagging tails, lapping tongues, as they all tried to jump on him. He laughed for a bit allowing them just for a minute. But after that minute he corrected them with a whistle and they all sat politely. He threw his satchel onto the lazy boy recliner as he walked in. He threw his coat onto the counter of his kitchen, then started rolling up his sleeves. He fed all of his dogs their special wet food he had made for them, afterwards he washed his hands. He grabbed an apple and headed upstairs towards his bedroom. He took one bite before he placed the apple onto his nightstand, he unbuttoned his flannel, throwing it into a nearby hamper. He kicked off his jeans and left them crumpled onto the floor. In just an undershirt and boxers he crawled into bed, snuggling underneath his thick blankets. His eyes fluttered shut, his breathing slowed down.

He opened his eyes. A black void appeared and suddenly Elise’s limp body floated up. She floated like a ghost, until she was impaled by large antlers. She hung on the antlers as the punctures began to turn red. Her white nightgown was soaked with blood as it began to drip down the fabric. The blood wouldn’t stop running and running. She became more pale with each dribble of blood that fell. She was being bled dry. Will woke up, his body was trembling, his breath was ragged. He was drenched in cold sweat. He threw off his soaked shirt, wiped himself with a rag. He laid a soft towel under him on his bed and lay on top of it.

He snuggled into his warm blankets seeking warmth for his chilled body. He would change the sheets tomorrow, he fell back asleep.

—--Hubris—--

"Alana Bloom? Do you remember me?" Crawford asked as he walked up to the professionally dressed woman.

Her blue eyes widened a bit in surprise. Her brunette hair shifted onto her other shoulder as it cascaded down her black like a long, dark river.

"Yes, I remember you Jack." She holds out her manicured hand to him. The two shake on it.

"I believe Will likes you. And it's been only a bit since you've been a guest speaker here. He feels that you won't analyze him like others have." Crawford continues walking alongside Alana, as they both don't have quite the time to dilly dally around. They had places to be.

"Well, that would be correct. I want to be friends with him. I want him to like me, Jack."

"So you're telling me you have no professional curiosity for Will's special ability?" He raises an eyebrow.

"That is why I believe never speaking to him alone is the best option. I do have a professional curiosity but I would rather be his friend."

“You have to have another reason other than that, Will isn’t the first guy you think of when you want friendship.”

“Jack, let me ask you. What do you think Will is driven by?” She looks Jack in the eyes.

“I guess you could say the innate *fear* that always is coursing through him. He’s used to being scared. Especially because of his *vivid* visions.”

“If you know that much, why do you force him out into the field? You know how much it irks him, and yet you continue to drive him to do it. Are you a *cruel* man, Jack? Do you take pleasure from watching him get *startled*?”

“No, of course I don’t. I haven’t given him anything I didn’t think he could ***handle***. I am not cruel, I am just trying to save lives. And if I didn’t believe Will could help me with that I would have never asked him to go on the field. Alana, think of all the lives *we* could *save*!”

“Promise me something Jack. Promise me!”

“What? Promise you what?”

“Promise me, you will not let him lose control. That you won’t let him get lost in his terrifying visions. That if it comes down to it you’ll lead him out like a damn guide dog.”

“I promise.”

—-Hubris—-

A man with dark curly hair along with dark, brown eyes, slightly a bit overweight, clutched a tissue that was tattered and wet with tears. Some snot had mostly been a part of the liquids that had stained the tissue. His shoulders shook as his ragged sniffles pierced and echoed throughout the spacious office. The office was lined by tall bookcases on one side, darkened by the lack of light from the curtained stretched panes of glass that almost reached to the ceiling. He sat in a designer black leather chaise, his expensive oxfords against the dark colored wood floor.

He placed the used tissue onto the glass side table to his left. He sobbed into his hands before wiping them onto his pants and reaching for another tissue from the tissue box. Across from him on a matching chair sat an older, poised gentleman. He was aged finely and delicately much like a vintage wine. He looked to be around his late 40's. He leaned forward a bit, his long legs crossed over each other. He was clad in a very expensive suit, expensive enough to possibly buy a car if he had wanted to. He was after all dressed with only the finest suit that was procured from the world's most sought out Italian designer. His dark, sandy blonde hair combed to perfection had thin, silver streaks that shined beautifully when the sun illuminated them. His piercing maroon eyes flickered in slight disdain for the man across him before clouding into an attentive but caring gaze. The other man's snot filled tissue tainted the glass side table, he could not avoid the thought of his grubby hands spreading germs around his office. He could not let himself be swayed by the ugly feelings, this man was after all his patient.

"I-I just don't understand, Dr. Lecter." croaked out the man.

"Mr. Froideveaux, may I call you Franklyn instead? You must understand the cognition that underlies the fear that drives your unsavory thoughts. Nothing in this room will shame you for the emotions you are experiencing. You are not between the sharp fangs of a lion's jaw. I can assure you that if such a large feline were to have lurked about here, I would let you know." Dr. Lecter comforted him.

"I understand…I just can't grapple with the thoughts that plague me as a result of my loneliness that I am facing. I just want to be understood. Loved.."

"You must not hide such emotions in your closet, Franklyn. Do not let the fear drive you into a closet as if it were to come alive and eat you. Quell your courage like Samson and defeat the lions of your fears."

"Thank you…that analogy you made for me..was so beautiful and thoughtful." Franklyn leaned forward a bit adoringly, he sniffled more alleviated now.

"Frankyln, I am merely here to help assist you to discover your ability to learn more about yourself. To better help you comprehend your own psyche. As of now, I do believe this would be a proper note to end off on that we could pick up at our next appointment.

Unfortunately, we have run out of time." Dr. Lecter stood up stretching to the height of six feet.

"But, but-I…I understand.." he sighed lingering on the black chair far more than he should. He wiped his sweaty palms on his pants before standing. He was led towards the door by Dr. Lecter.

Dr. Lecter opened the door, his gaze landed upon an unfamiliar stranger sitting within his waiting area.

"Dr. Lecter? I'm FBI agent Jack Crawford, head of the Behavioral Science Unit at Quantico." He mistook Franklyn for Dr. Lecter, holding his hand out to Franklyn. The two shook hands, Dr. Lecter's eyes tinged with a bit of disgust, he hadn't forgotten Franklyn's grubby snot spread hands.

"That is in fact my patient, Franklyn. I hate to be impolite but, this is a private exit solely for my patients." Dr. Lecter looked at Crawford disapprovingly.

"Oh…Dr.Lecter, my apologies." Jack seemed a bit embarrassed at his mistake. Nonetheless, he began searching his coat pockets in search of his FBI identification. Finally his fingers felt the leather and he pulled it out demonstrating his clearance.

"May I ask what I can assist you with Mr. Crawford?" His eyes narrowed in the slightest suspicion.

"I'm just here for a chat, Dr. Lecter."

"Oh, in that case please give me a chance to finish my paperwork, unless you are here for my patient?" He turned to look at Franklyn.

"Oh, no, no, just here to speak with you."

Franklyn sighed in relief and showed himself out. Crawford walked forward towards Dr. Lecter's door but he stood guarding the entrance.

"Apologies, but like I said I need to finish my patient's confidential paperwork first, then I could assist you. You may wait out here during that time."

"Ah, yes alright." He made his way back to the chair he was sitting in before.

After a short while, Dr. Lecter swung open the door, motioning to Crawford that his chance to speak was now. Crawford followed him into the spacious office, closing the door behind him. They walked over to the black chairs each sitting in one. Dr. Lecter was satisfied knowing he had purged Franklyn's germs from the area before Crawford had sat at it.

"What has called you this way to me Mr. Crawford? I'm assuming this is not in relation to applying for therapy with me?"

"I am here by suggestion. Your former pupil Alana Bloom, suggested I pay you a visit."

"Ah, Alana, of course. A bright woman, one of the few I respect within the field of psychology. I hold high regards for her." He seemed more at ease with a bit of familiarity.

"Yes, she spoke very highly of you. You were the youngest to intern at John Hopkins, due to your talents. Specifically, for your anatomical drawings. Speaking of drawings…" Crawford at some point had gravitated towards Dr. Lecter's bureau. His eyes had picked up some sketches. He gently lifted a thin parchment to unveil very intricate but beautiful graphite drawings. "These are beautiful, so detailed. Is this paris?" He continued scanning the drawings.

"Yes, I tend to draw beautiful sights I've committed to memory. As a young lad I frequented the sites of Paris when I lived with my uncle in France. I naturally grew fond of drawing Paris. I learned that scalpels tend to sharpen pencils more efficiently. But I believe that is information one could not acquire without an investigation, Mr. Crawford."

"Oh, no of course not. Like I said, Alana suggested I approach you. I made sure to read up on you. Actually, I found your paper "*Evolutionary Origins of Social Exclusion*" to be really interesting. Even for a layman like me."

"A layman? Many educated people walk down the halls of your Behavioral Science Unit, where you are the head of. And yet you consider yourself a layman?"

"I certainly do in your presence Dr. Lecter. That is exactly why I need you to provide your assistance in creating a psychological profile for us."

"Alright. I believe I could offer my help to you. And please call me by my first name, Hannibal."

----Hubris—-

Three men stood glancing at the sea of girls on the bulletin board of Quantico's F.B.I academy. Crawford was angry and frustrated. Somehow, a police officer at Nichols crime scene had taken a picture. This led to the domino effect that ultimately landed sprawled at Freddie Lounds's feet. An infamous journalist, the woman behind Tattlecrime. A site where crimes and murders that belonged to the latest serial killers were presented. Every knitty gritty detail posted for the world to see. Crawford had no information yesterday, today he had an abundance.

"12 confessions, no information yesterday. Today all those confessions now had some sort of newfound information. Freddie posted the Nichols crime scene on Tattlecrime." Crawford sat upset.

"Absolutely tasteless, that flame haired woman. She can't seem to keep her nose out of business that isn't hers." Will shook his head angrily. His frames slid down to the tip of his nose, he pushed them slightly back up.

Hannibal was still analyzing the bulletin board intensely. That's when he got an idea and his eyes twinkled slightly in amusement. He had his eyes on the gruffly dressed man in flannel. He wasn't too sure how the other man could wear such clashing patterns. He looked like he had rushed to get dressed or as if he were applying to be some sort of lumberjack. He had missed a few buttons on his flannel button up. His curly hair was unruly, screaming bed hair. Oh how badly did he want to run a comb through them to sort them out more.

"Taste is that something you sheldon struggle with, Mr. Graham?"

"Will is just fine. I don't find normalities to be a high priority. Taste? I would not say taste is a big thing I struggle with. I struggle with the taste of my ideas and mind might leave behind instead."

"Similarly, I struggle with the unsavory tastes my ideas may leave behind in my mouth either." He tries to initiate eye contact with Will but Will quickly maneuvers his eyes to the wood of Crawford's desk that seems far more interesting. Will already hated eye contact; he didn't need to look at the eyeballs of a random man.

"I can't stop it from happening as much as anyone else could. I build forts." He sips his coffee from a novelty mug that reads "I love dogs".

"You can associate new tastes with new things."

"You could also associate new forts to new things you want to block out." He murmurs into his mug.

Hannibal moves in for a better observation. He sits down at the chair next to Will. He takes in his hand his own mug of coffee. He takes a small sip, the coffee brew differs heavily from his high quality roasted brews he made with his name-brand french press. He puts it back down, unable to drink anymore.

"You are not fond of eye contact. Most people would make eye contact with those they are speaking to."

"Eye contact is a tricky thing. You might see something you wouldn't like, or if you look for something you won't find it. You can't exactly focus on one thing either because different assumptions are constantly running through your brain. Useless ones like, "Wow! Look at those specks of gold in this guy's turd brown colored eyes!" Do you understand what I mean?" Will painstakingly scans the eyes of the older gentleman dramatically as if he were trying to make a point of what he had said.

Hannibal's eyes twinkled once more with amusement, his eyes creased into crescent moons as he let out a chuckle. He found the sharp tongued man in front of him to be a bit interesting. Will on other hand was a bit stunned at the other man's display of emotion, he seemed animated, and his laugh rang out as if it were some type of music. Not that Will, cared of course..right?

"My daily..no, my need to avoid eye contact triumphs every. Single. Time. Jack-" Will turns to Jack as he's ready to end the conversation with Hannibal and start looking to ask questions

but he was interrupted before he could get another word out.

"I can only wonder, that with your eyes, with the information you learn, your mind is affected heavily. Your set of beliefs are ever so present, but unwanted associations to new sets of ideals that don't belong to you make you feel uncomfortable. Perhaps, you are scared of what you are able to see or dream. No boundaries can be constructed to protect what you love, rather than things you wish to keep out in that brain of yours." Hannibal seems to have Will a bit figured out. He leaned in a bit, a bit excited to see what type of reaction he'd get out of the other man.

"Jack..Jack?! Who is he here to draw up a psychological profile for?" Will was enraged.

"The serial killer we're looking for." Crawford sighs.

"Then why the hell is he analyzing me?! Jack you know I do not do well when I'm being poked and probed at."

"Apologies, Will. My ability to analyze the psych cannot be stopped just as your ability to emphasize and imagine. We are at an impasse." Hannibal cooly says as he looks over the file named Elise Nichols.

"Stop that. I know you aren't really sorry! Don't psychoanalyze me. You know how I get. I better go..before you try to get more out of me than you should and that i'd like to allow." Will jabs a finger in Hannibal's direction, before storming out the room. Will had also realized he was late to his lecture.

"I don't think you should scare him off like that again." Crawford eyes Hannibal warily.

"He has extreme empathy, he can assume anyone's point of view. He can quite literally place himself into your shoes, my shoes, or someone else's shoes. It is a nerving gift, Jack. Perception is better referred to here as a double edged sword for Will. He may be able to see more than the normal mind may but it comes with a price."

"He calls this "gift", a "curse"." Crawford retorts.

"He is wrong about that. He'll come to see soon, how valuable that gift of his truly is. Now, about this…cannibal. I think I could help Will come face to face with him."

—Hubris—

Will stood stunned. They were called to the middle of a boat load nowhere in Hibbing, Minnesota. A murder of ravens bombarded an object in the middle of the dead grass field. An agent nearby had to scare them off with a crazy dance where he waved his hands like one of those blow up balloon wave men you might see outside a car dealership. If Will had not been so unsettled he would have laughed. The feel of the dead straw like grass under his soles bothered Will. Everytime he would grind his sole down nervously a squeaky, rubbery noise would bother his ears. The standing hairs on his neck prickled and bothered Will. Everything

right now bothered Will. He was a couple of meters away from the crime scene unsure of how to approach the whole situation. His blue gloves made his palms feel more sweaty, he swallowed nervously.

"What are you doing there standing like a fool? Get in there already, I didn't haul you from Virginia for you to waste my time. The stag head was stolen. He was dubbed "the Minnesota Shrike." by Tattlecrime." Crawford barked at Will.

"A Shrike is a bird bird who mostly lives in Eurasia and Africa. There are only two types that are found in North America. Shrikes are known for their brutal hunting techniques. They take their prey and impale them onto thorny brambles and barbed wire. They rip out the organs of their prey right out of their bodies. They store whatever they want for later like someone would with restaurant leftovers in their own little hideouts." Price explains to Will.

Will nods as if he actually made sense out of what Jimmy said. He inched his way closer to the forensic trio already inspecting the body with ease. Impaled on stag antlers was a young woman with pale skin, brown hair. She met the match perfectly. She lay limp with her legs and arms dangling downwards, almost as if she were being presented, or reborn she was quite naked. Her body was lifted into the air. Perfectly presenting that she had a large gash in the middle of her chest, something was taken from her. He started to tremble; he didn't know if it was with fear or guilt or awe. He had never seen anything so thought provoking.

"The killer wanted her found, he left her here as if he were leaving a painting at a museum. This was his unveiling to the world. He was proud of his work at being able to humiliate her with his ostentatious design. The nagging petulant need to mock her or us? Either way he was making fun of someone's efforts." Will looked more with disgruntled, fascination at the body.

"Where did all his love go?" Crawford looked with disgust at the violent way the girl had been mistreated.

"The real Minnesota Shrike did not lose his love at all. Whoever killed this girl didn't even have love for her to begin with, I can tell you that." Will shook his head denying Crawford's statement.

"He was sadistic enough to rip out her lungs when she was still breathing with them." Brian shook his head with a bit of a shiver.

"No, no! Our cannibal, he loved these girls. He would have never wanted to hurt them in that type of sadistic way. He didn't want them to feel pain. His way of showing his love was consuming them. Whoever did this little..presentation, thought this girl was no more than the equivalent of a pig on a spit being slow cooked at a party." Will was angry.

"If this wasn't the Shrike, then that means we have a copycat on our hands. How would we go about catching him?" Crawford asked.

"Our killer was interested in privacy. He most likely has some sort of place he takes our girls to, where he dismantles them apart. Where he disappears the evidence. He's no way interested in the little nouveau riche art presentation the way the copycat is. He probably has a home or isolated cabin in the woods. He most definitely hunts, he probably has a room

filled with prized deer antlers. I think he's motivated to kill by his daughter. She's blossoming into an adult pretty soon.

His darling girl is going to leave for college and leave him behind. She's most likely an only child. He picks girls to kill that look like her, which explains the pattern of appearances they all share. On the other hand, the copycat? We have nothing to go off of, no patterns, no past information. He copies other killings for fun, and will probably never recreate this kind of crime scene ever again. He's a sadistic calculating son of a bitch, we'll probably won't be able to catch him not for a long time. Maybe you should ask what your perfect Dr. Lecter thinks about this, he's really good at making psychological profiles by the looks of it. Just saying from experience. Now I think I've given you all I got to give so I'm out of here." huffs Will agitated and overloaded sensory wise.

He walks off, he's had enough of the dead. Enough of Crawford, enough of too many sounds and feelings he can't describe. Enough of the amount of eyes staring at him, the large amount of agents all there.

----Hubris—-

Hannibal firmly kneads the pink meat underneath his palms and knuckles. He was tenderizing the meat in preparation of his meal. After a bit he finally reached for a rolled up leather cover. He unrolled it revealing his high quality knives. He picked from the crop a sharp knife, delicately he sliced the meat into squares. The cut of meat he picked was a pair of lungs. He took his cubed lungs on the cutting board towards his stove, he seasoned the meat slightly. The hot iron skillet that was oiled was waiting, the flames underneath dancing in different hues of reds, yellows, and oranges. The flames were hot enough to be tinged blue at the top. He slid the meat into the pan with precision, the meat cried as it sizzled and squealed. He moved the meat around the pan as he moved it gently by the handle with a rag. The meat had reached the highest temperature, flames licked over the meat, charring it to perfection. He knew how to move the pan with dexterity, he had the comparable skills of a high cuisine chef.

He artistfully slid the meat onto a cutting board to rest, while he began on the rest of the sides. He procured lettuce and several vegetables, rinsing it all underneath cool water. He diced everything, tossing them together in a salad bowl. He started on the italian vinaigrette, gathering the materials. He poured different liquids, vegetables, and aromatics into his name-brand blender. He pressed the on button and it roared to life. He sliced the resting meat until he deemed the vinaigrette had finished blending. He plated the meat onto a egg-white plate right next to the bed of salad. He drizzled a few lines of the vinaigrette onto the salad, he cleaned the rim of the plate where the sauce had escaped. He ground a bit of pepper onto the meat, squeezed a bit of lime and placed a few leaves of cilantro on it as well.

He took the plate into his dining room in one hand, the other carried a bottle of wine. He set the bottle of wine onto his long, dark wood table. He placed his plate at the center of his placement mat. He positioned his set of utensils around his plate. His forks and napkin to the left, knives and spoons to the right of the plate. A desert cuillère and fourchette to the top. His collection of glasses to the top right. He popped open the bottle of 1945 red wine to

complement his meal. He poured the deep red wine into his wine glass and finally sat down to enjoy his meal at the head of the table. He looked across to the other end of the table, closed his eyes and retreated to his Mind Palace. When he opened his eyes a small toddler sat at the end, a girl with chick fluffy, yellow hair. Big, round, bright blue eyes that shined like the sky. Her chubby cheeks flushed in an adorable swell of pink held a wide grin. She barely had any teeth, just like how her head barely reached the table. But her chunky baby star shaped hands rested palm down as she stared excitedly across at Hannibal. She had a plate set in between her but it was empty. His fingers wrapped around the thin neck of the wine glass and he rose it high into the air.

"Mischa, let us give cheers and dedicate this meal to the one and only Will Graham.

Maybe the thanks should be extended to the Minnesota Shrike for bringing us together." his grin resembled one of the grins the cheshire cat might give.

Mischa clapped her baby hands together excitedly.

"Anniba! Anniba! Sing! Sing! Thanks!" she squealed with exhilaration.

"I suppose I could humor you and sing thanks for the meal. I'll sing your favorite song." he began singing softly, staring at her lovingly.

"*Sagt, wer mag das Männlein sein,*

Das da steht im Wald allein

Mit dem purpurroten Mäntelein."

"Again! Anniba! Again!" she cheered.

He closed his eyes and opened them. Just like that the loving memory of the breathing Mischa disappeared back into his Mind Palace. He took his fork and knife, slicing a smaller piece of lung. He led the lung on his fork into his mouth, where he savored it with a light hum of enjoyment. He relished the moment, bringing his wine to his mouth. Which he inhaled deeply, swishing it around, finally sipping it.

----Hubris—-

Will hated Minnesota. He hated anywhere that wasn't home actually. He was used to living in shabby places, so the motel hadn't bothered him at all. But he still preferred the refuge of his Wolftrap home. Where he had his family, his dogs, where he was safe. He decided a hot shower was due, he needed something to calm him down. He screwed on the water, and threw off his clothes. It squealed loudly as the temperature began to rise, Will put out a hand to test the waters. Once it felt right, he stepped in. The water stung his skin but the heat helped to relax his muscles. His hands ran up his face as he slicked back the soaking wet curls that covered his face.

He closed his eyes to relax but he slipped too far into the dark. He was transported to a bone freezing forest. Everything was tinged with blue; there was no light in the dusk. A giant stag appeared into the frame, it took a defensive stance. Almost screaming that he was in danger. Will yelled fearfully when his eyes opened. He was grasping his face frantically. He shook violently, he was wheezing for air. He took shallow and shaky breaths. He sank down to the floor and hugged his knees close, tucking them underneath his chin as he rocked himself to self-soothe.

The hot water hit him from above and rolled down his body. He kept rocking and rocking as his warm tears were lost in the hot rain. His sobs rang and echoed. He was so scared, how had he slipped too far in? He didn't know how long he had been in there but once he saw his skin turn lobster red, he knew he had to get out. He forced himself out, and collapsed onto his bed with a towel. He yanked the covers off and snuggled underneath them. The sheets smelt like aggressive flowers, nothing like the rain and dog smell his sheets back at home smelled like.

---Hubris—

Will was back home. Curled within his own covers sleeping peacefully. Before a few sharp knocks shattered his peace. The dogs were sent into a frenzy barking at the unfamiliar smell. He groaned, groggily sliding out of bed. He bare feet slapped against the wood floor as he navigated his way throughout his dark room to the door. He opened the door and a harsh flood of light assaulted his eyes, he hissed rubbing his eyes. Once his vision focused, his mouth went agape. There in a different expensive suit stood Dr. Lecter. Will's head whipped to the clock on his wall reading 7:30 a.m.

"Good morning, Will. May I come in?" Hannibal asked a little too enthusiastically than Will would have liked.

"Why are you here Dr. Lecter? Why isn't Crawford here?" his eyes looked suspiciously at him.

"He is in the midst of assisting at court. Today you and I will be embarking on this mission alone. Please call me Hannibal. May I come in?"

Will gave Hannibal one more side glare before shuffling inside leaving Hannibal at the door, he did leave the door open. Hannibal invited himself in and Will shuffled deeper into his dark home sitting down at his small table. Hannibal shut the door and everything was engulfed in darkness.

"It's a tad bit dark here."

"I sleep better in total darkness."

"It's dark in here."

"Light hurts my eyes."

"It's hard to see what I brought you in the dark."

"Fine, help me open this curtain then. You get the right, I'll get the left." Will slides the curtain to the left while Hannibal opens the other one.

The once dark surroundings now ignited by light looked quite messy. Coats and papers were strewn across Will's furniture. Different pairs of muddy shoes were on the floor near the door. Dog beds and toys were everywhere, a thin layer of dog hair covered the floors and furniture. Will wasn't embarrassed one bit, this was his home and Hannibal was the one who arrived unannounced. Hannibal grimaced a bit at the mess but hid his discomfort like a pro. He set a tote bag onto the table, and sat down on a rickety wood chair across from Will. It squeaked under his weight, he was a bit concerned it'd snap under him. Will grinned at Hannibal's discomfort.

"Don't worry that chair won't snap, it's been around a couple years. Want coffee?"

"No, thank you. I've brought my own in my thermos here-" Hannibal is interrupted once Will gets up and leaves him at the table alone.

"Whatever floats your yacht." he rolls his eyes and he heads into his kitchen. He grabs another novelty mug, probably another mug he got in a secret santa. It reads "Man I Love Fishing." He fills up the mug with boiling water from his water dispenser, tossing in a few scoops of instant coffee. And a humble amount of sugar, 5 scoops. He pours in a bit of milk as he stirs the coffee. He finally sets the mug down on the table. Hannibal immediately recoils slightly, his eyes water slightly.

"You alright? Your eyes are watering." Will raises an eyebrow.

"It's most likely a bit of allergies from dust. I'm alright, you need not worry about me. What is in that mug?"

"Instant coffee."

"Instant coffee? Could you further elaborate?"

"Coffee that you can make instantly with hot water."

"No machines or grounding needed?" Hannibal physically grimaced.

"No the coffee is already grounded into dust, it just dissolves in hot water."

"That is quite peculiar."

"Sure, if you say so."

Hannibal unzips the tote, pulling out two containers and his thermos. He opens the lid of one almost showcasing the meal. Will's mouth immediately watered at the aroma.

"I've created a hearty protein scramble in your honor. I hope you don't get offended but, you could use a bit more weight on you, Will. You are on the verge of bordering on

malnourishment, you should eat more." Hannibal looked a bit worried for Will.

"Quit with the over-dramatics. I am not malnourished. I know how to take care of myself." Will clicks his tongue annoyed.

"I am simply looking out for you, Will." Hannibal uncovers his own proportion.

Grabbing the cutlery he set aside for himself, he stabs a piece of sausage. Will's breath hitches, almost as if he were waiting for Hannibal to take the first bite. Hannibal's eyes sparkle with curiosity. He brings the fork to his mouth, Will leans in a bit in anticipation. Suddenly the fork is placed back into his container.

"Why don't you do us the honor of tasting the meal first? You are the inspiration of this meal?"

"Um..no i-it's alright you eat first."Will nervously stammered.

"I insist on it."

"No, no you're the guest here. You eat first." Will shakes his head.

"Will, you grew up hungry did you not?"

"W-what?"

"Growing up being the last to eat. Only eating the scraps from whatever your father decided to give you. Most children who grew up that way expected more often to receive nothing at all. This fueled the food insecurities in you. You often never eat quite well because you believe that if you survived then you could survive now. Starvation, a close friend of yours, makes you feel secure. Autism worsens this to a higher level because at times you struggle to meet the drive that reminds you to do the basic needs to live. I want you to take the first bite. I want to make sure you are eating. Indulge yourself."

Will is at a loss of words. He didn't expect so much of him to be stripped from him, forcefully peeled from the layers that formed him just from a small action he'd done. His hand trembled in either fear or anger, he couldn't quite figure out which one, it could be both.

"Didn't I tell you to not psychoanalyze me-" Will was livid but before he could finish Hannibal had cupped his face with one hand, scooping some eggs into his mouth. And Will automatically chewed and swallowed. Hannibal chuckled.

"Good boy." Hannibal patted Will's cheek. Will flushed fiercely as he sent his chair flying backwards. Hannibal finally began to eat. He savored the taste, his eyes closed. He swallowed and his Adam apple bobbled, Will couldn't help but watch intensely.

"I don't appreciate you shoving things down my throat like that."

"It was the only way."

"And how about what I want?"

"At what moment have you begun to care about what you want? Since you've met me?"

"N-no, I've always had free will."

"That is quite arguable. You've always done what others ask of you. Did you have to grow up doing everything your father ordered you to? If you didn't follow his whims, would you get abused? Tell me Will, was New Orleans cold during winter?" Hannibal had noticed the large amount of blankets around the house.

"Stop. Stop it! Stop trying to get into my head. I do whatever I'm told, I'm not a damn puppet!"

"You most certainly do, look at the position you've put yourself in, Will. You've put your health at risk only because Jack told you utilizing your gift was the best thing for everyone. You did not answer the question about your father but, I suppose I could let it go."

"You know what?! I don't get what fascinates everyone about you. You're a pretentious prick who enjoys picking apart people. You are glorified like a goddamn christian Jesus painting. I don't find you a bit interesting at all!"

"In due time I shall prove you wrong. Rather on the contrary, I find you intriguing. I do not see you as Jack's fragile little teacup, or a defenseless stray who needs protection from himself as Alana does. I see a man who is far fiercer than he plays himself out to be. The mongoose I wish to have lie below my house when the snakes slither by. I see you, Will." Hannibal meets Will's eyes, sending shivers down Will's spine. He can't seem to tear his eyes away, as almost as if Hannibal's maroon eyes are stopping him from doing so. He can almost see a hint of desire in Hannibal's eyes but he immediately shakes the thought, he must be seeing things.

"Why couldn't you just apologize like a civilized person? Why do you have to go on a tangent." groans Will frustrated as he sat back down at the table.

"I owe you my sincerest apologies, I should not have flayed you so harshly, I just find the idea of you being mistreated to be disdainful. The lack of self-respect you have for yourself, your lack of will to survive. I needed to clarify and open your eyes so you could see how valuable you really are."

Will melts a bit at the notion, his stomach flutters and his heartbeat quickens. He gives Hannibal a soft smile.

"I know it won't be long till I madden you once again, so take this as a pre-notion for the apologies to come."

And that's what he had been waiting for, his smile was wiped off his face and he returned to his usual scowl.

"Just cut out the analysis parts, and keep your intentions both clear as well as simple. None of that mumbo jumbo, you hear me?"

"I don't see why we must keep everything simple, what's there to be ruined with a bit of complexity? With complexity we can entertain ourselves, by extending the possibility of friendship we are broadening our horizons to more pleasantries. I like you, Will, I'd like to get to know you more."

"Fine, don't say I didn't warn you. Let me eat in peace." Will shovels forkfuls into his mouth, the food causes his own adam apple to bobble as it passes down his throat. Hannibal's eyes sharpen a bit at the sight but only for a fleeting moment does he allow himself to.

"I'm quite happy that you've agreed."

"Did I really have a choice?"

"You always have a choice with me, Will."

"Yeah sure."

Hannibal chuckles, he gives Will the same kind of look he had given him before. Crescent shaped eyes, wrinkles at the edges. The warm melodic tumbling from his throat that sends shivers through Will's spine. Will quickly turns to look elsewhere, he can't stand to look at him. Especially because he's looking at Will that way. The way no one ever looks at him. His heart aches a bit in want.

"How are you liking the food?"

"It's delicious."

"I'm quite happy you find the meal tasty. If you wouldn't mind me asking but, why does Jack believe you have the talent to go track down these killers?"

"That's the thing, I don't have the talent to track them down. But, I can think like them and figure out how'd they act or plan to do next.That's why I don't think the shrike killed the last girl."

"What makes you believe that?"

"The way she was treated does not align with the way the shrike would treat her."

"The details are intricate, only you could have caught them." Hannibal praises Will.

Will blushes slightly, but shakes off the feeling unwilling to accept praise from Hannibal of all people. "The copycat wanted to show us, no me actually, things that he knew only I could catch. He wanted me to see the differences between the brutality of both killers. The fine line between evil and the greater evil here. He did it on purpose."

"You've been recreating his ideals then correct?"

"Yes, of course. That's my job at crime scenes. Interpreting the scenes."

"What did you see?"

"I saw that something is wrong with him for sure." He snorted.

"Do you ever feel like something is wrong with you?"

"No, I'm doing quite peachy actually." Will sarcastically denied.

"I guess we are quite alike in that pre-tense. Neither one of us is bothered by such ideas." Hannibal's slight smile was brought on by Will's southern charm and bite.

"Obviously nothing is wrong with you. You're grandiloquent, you always manage to impress."

"Did I impress you?" Hannibal tilts his head slightly, waiting for a response.

"No."

"I will work tirelessly to impress you then."

"Go ahead and try."

"You know Will, you have a strong exterior. I was right about you being a sharp mongoose. The small but dangerous predator, the type to do its best to defend itself against larger and more dangerous predators, snakes."

"What does that make you then? A sphinx? You're always spouting all these methodical riddles. I don't get you at all."

"Don't fret, you will in due time, my dear Will."

----Hubris—-

"I've never been in a car quite like this one." Hannibal looked a bit queasy and uncomfortable.

"My Volvo? She's a great car right?! Runs like the wind." Will grins as he steers the car.

"Yes…she sure does." Hannibal grimaces.

"Oh! Are these plush seats uncomfortable for your highnesses bottom? Should I change them out for leather to match the ones in your bentley?" snides Will.

"How did you know I have royal blood?" Hannibal pales a bit, he is stunned.

"You really have royal blood in you? Why am I not surprised." Sighs Will.

"I am technically a Count."

"Ok Count Hannibal, hold on we're getting close to some where some potholes are around here."

"Actually the title is with my last name Lecter- potholes?" The car shakes violently on the dirt road.

"Whoops, my bad didn't see that one." Will squints at the road.

"Your glasses, Will…" Hannibal points at the glasses in the cup saver.

"Oh, shoot I completely forgot they weren't on." He flicks them open, slipping them onto his face.

They continue to drive towards a construction site.

"Remind me why we are here, Will?"

"Beverly found a piece of metal so we're tracing it to all the sites that are using the same materials."

"That's very smart." Hannibal smiles.

"Of course. Why are you smiling?" Will stares back at Hannibal.

"I'm quite excited to see what's behind the curtain where not many get to see how the Fbi investigates."

"You're lucky we aren't doing rookie stuff. Let's go." He exits the vehicle.

Hannibal follows behind and the two walk up to the trailer. They speak to a receptionist, and the next thing they know they are hauling box loads of paperwork into the back of Will's Volvo. Hannibal dramatically drops a box of papers.

"My apologies."

"Be careful, just go get more boxes. I got this." Huffs Will as he scoops the papers up one by one as they blow around slightly.

Hannibal goes back inside looking for the information both Will and him had found on the suspect. Garrett Jacob Hobbs, left a number, no address. He took a tissue picking up the receptionist's phone dialing the numbers with another tissue. A girl answers.

"Hello, Hobbs family?" She chirps.

"Your father, is his name Garrett Jacob Hobbs?"

"Yes, and this is?"

"He's the Minnesota Shrike."

"..."

"Did you know that?"

"Yes…"

"Then do what I say."

"What?"

"Fight back."

"Huh?"

"Handover the phone to your father."

"Fine."

"Garrett Jacob Hobbs?" Bellowed a man.

"They know."

---Hubris—

Will slammed the door to his Volvo. Hannibal had lingered in the car watching Will walk up to the door of Garrett Jacob Hobbs's home. Will knocked on the door and stood there for a moment. He hadn't heard anything so he turned the door knob slowly prying the door open. He had his hand gun ready as he inched his way into the home's entrance. He was alert as his eyes scanned the home as he crept deeper within the house. He had a slight tremor is his hand but he forced himself to keep his grasp steady. He breathed in and out to help keep his heart rate a little lower despite the hordes of adrenaline that pumped through his body.

"Help." Called a weak voice.

Will rans towards the sound keeping his gun in front of him. Along the way he almost tripped on the body of a woman who had bled out from a neck wound. He yelped in fear and checked her pulse but she was gone. He kept going towards where he had the voice and he was led to the kitchen. There leaning against the entrance wall was a young teenage girl. She had brown hair and pale skin, she was Garrett Jacob Hobbs' daughter. His eyes widened at the bloody rag she held at her neck. It was pressed tightly against her neck, and in her other hand she held onto a knife.

"What happened to your dad?" He lowered his gun and spoke in a soft voice.

"He's dead, look behind you. I killed him in self defense after he killed my mom and tried to kill me." Her voice trembled in fear as she breathed in shaky breaths.

"It's ok sweetheart, you're safe now you can put down the knife." He looked at the dead body and put away his gun in his holster. He bent down, removing the knife from her hand, and kicked it away. It skidded to the opposite wall with a screech. He dialed 911 as he bent over the girl.

"Please don't leave me, I'm scared." She begged. Her hand was struggling to hold the rag now as she held out her other bloody hand towards Will.

Will immediately jumped into action holding the rag in place, he could feel the blood spurting into his hand. He was starting to panic as the blood seeped through staining his hand.

"I'm scared." Her voice shook as one of her hands clasped onto Will's button up.

Will squeezed a bit tighter trying to keep more blood from escaping, he began hyperventilating. *How was he going to save her from dying? She was going to die and it would be all his fault, because he couldn't keep her alive.* Suddenly, a strong hand held Will's hand into place as another clasped around the other side of the girl's neck.

"You need to apply more pressure." Hannibal whispered into Will's ear. Will's face whipped to look at Hannibal, his shoulders drooped a bit in relief. His wide eyes looked at Hannibal in awe.

The two sat still waiting for the ambulance to arrive. Will spoke to the girl in quiet whispers saying she was going to "make it and to keep fighting to live". He wouldn't let her die, no, Hannibal and him wouldn't let her die. Hannibal's gaze seemed to bring Will more comfort and ease. The loud sirens arrived right outside the home as paramedics bolted in with a stretcher. They applied first aid and hauled the girl away.

"Where are you taking her? Will she be alright?" Called out Will to a paramedic.

"We need one of you to come with us." Said the paramedic.

"I'll go, Will, I need you to stay here and wait for Jack." Hannibal put his hand on Will's shoulder before hopping into the ambulance that sped away to the nearest hospital.

Will was left standing alone. He looked down at his bloody hands that shook with fear. *What the hell just happened?* He looked around in shock. He stood there waiting for god knows how long, he felt that an eternity had just passed. Soon police vehicles and Crawford's car had peeled into the neighborhood, parking at the home's front. Crawford ran out of his car fuming as he slammed the door of his car shut.

"What the hell happened here, Will?!" Boomed Crawford.

"I don't know Jack. She was bleeding out, Garret was dead along with his wife. I..just don't know how this all could have happened out of nowhere." He choked back a sob, if his hands weren't soaked in blood he'd be crying into his hands.

"Will, right now isn't the time to have a panic attack.." Seethed Crawford.

Will looked down over to his chest where the girl had left a bloody hand-print, and up to his shoulder where Hannibal had left one. He couldn't stop the flood of emotions that left him shaking. He started gasping for air as he sank down to his feet as he pulled himself close and started to rock himself. Crawford threw his arms into the air in exasperation and walked off to go investigate the crime scene.

----Hubris—-

Will had gone home to shower and change before heading to the hospital address sent by Alana. He stopped by a store, buying a small plush dog. He wanted Abigail to have something to comfort her, as much as how childish it might be. He thought she could use a friend. He walked up to the front entrance walking past the receptionist, he didn't need to ask for the room number. He knew it already as it rang throughout his head. *408, 408, 408*. His gaze stuck to the floor as he whizzed past all the busy doctors and visitors. He squeezed the plush in his hand a bit to bring himself a bit of comfort in the unfamiliar hospital. He stood in front of the door of a room, he looked over to double check it read "**408: Abigail Hobbs"**. He gently turned the door knob and pushed into the door gently as he stepped in. His heart stung at the state Abigail was in. She was attached to all kinds of machines, cords, and ventilators. She looked pale and small against the sickly, pale blue hospital sheets. He couldn't cry again, not in front of her. Her eyes were shut, she was in a coma. He walked in fully and was surprised once his eyes trailed up a long pair of tailored pants. His eyes finally landed onto Hannibal's sleeping face. His head had fallen forward in what seemed to be a very uncomfortable position but that did not stop him from holding onto Abigail's hand. He slept soundly, right next to her. Will's heart swelled and fluttered at the sight, he slowly blinked at Hannibal as his eyes melted softly at the sight. He sank down into a chair to Abigail's right that seemed to have been pulled there just for Will. He placed the stuffed dog in the crook of Abigail's arm, squeezing the dog's head playfully. He leaned back drinking up the moment where the three were in peace and out of harm's way. They were together.

Chapter End Notes

I know, i know i messed up the timeline but please just join me for this ride. I recently have come to an epiphany, and decided to go rogue in a few aspects. I'd still like the story to follow the main timeline somewhat but i'm getting creative and wild with it. I think you guys will like to see how this goes hahahah! Thanks for reading!!!!

Quixotic

Chapter Notes

Heeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeey sorry I am a very undependable author. I've been very busy and very lazy but here my update. I might not update in a while though sadly... I've gotten a job meaning I can no longer do the unemployed friend activities such as writing. I will try my best to update but I cannot assure that it will be as often. I will appreciate if you still choose to stick around <3 Now this doesn't mean I won't update anymore it's just going to take a little longer. I won't stop writing till i'm dead....anywaysss enjoy hheehhehe IM SORRY.

Tw: Violence, Child abuse, blood
I put in another warning before the scene make sure to always read the warnings! Stay safe.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will had gone home after spending a few nights at the hospital instead of going to sleep at his house. More like he was sent home by a nurse who claimed he was starting to smell like "death". He grumbled but did as he was told. Now he stripped down and jumped into a hot shower. He could feel his stubble had become overgrown so he trimmed it down closer to his face. He put on a new outfit, one of the many same flannel and jeans combinations he had. He packed a to go bag so he could spend more nights at the hospital with Abigail. He threw the bag into his Volvo after he had fed his pack. He sat at the steering wheel wondering what was next. His phone rang loudly, he sighed once the name on the screen read "Crawford".

He answered reluctantly, "Hello?"

"I need you down here. We've located Garett Jacob Hobbs' cabin. Leave your car at Quantico, you're riding with me." He hung up immediately after finishing his message.

Will groaned, raking his hands across his face and through his damp curls. He drove to Quantico, Crawford was already waiting for him in his Black Chevrolet Suburban. Will opened the back door and threw the duffle bag he had packed for his staying at the hospital, now he was utilizing it for other purposes. He was about to climb in but was promptly screamed at to sit up front. Begrudgingly, he sat up front, avoiding Crawford's stern gaze by looking out the window. He kept himself entertained this way as the city had been engulfed by the forest's vegetation. Soon he had nodded off, partly because of the lack of sleep he's gotten over the past days. His cheek pressed into the car door's window.

He was rudely awakened by Crawford who rapped loudly on the car's window, yelling, "We're here." With a thin smile he walked off leaving Will behind.

Will got out of the suburban, trying to assimilate himself to his new surroundings. He looked around at the leafy green environment. He's never visited Gunpowder falls state park before, too bad it had to be this way. Both Crawford and Will approached the cabin with blue gloves. With zero regard, Crawford tore down the yellow police tape barring the cabin entrance down. He turned the knob while pushing into the cabin. He waltzed in going towards the stairs further back. Will chose a more cautious approach staying back with slow steps as he shined his flashlight around the cabin. Taking in the deer mounts into consideration, he made his way up the rickety steps.

Will was surprised by the enormous amount of deer antler lining the walls of the second floor. *So this is the Shrike's paradise, huh?* Even Crawford who had trailed up the stairs before Will was still disturbed by the bad vibes.

"You should stick this into your little museum." Mused playfully Will.

"We need to get everything on him before we can put this case to rest. We can also help put an end to more guys like him popping up. We don't want someone to hide 8 bodies again."

“He probably hid them in his stomach, I don’t think you could find them if they’ve been digested.”

“He had to have left something behind?”

“I doubt it.” Deadpanned Will.

“If he was disappearing these girls in his stomach he couldn’t have possibly consumed them alone. I’m sure he would have needed the help of others.”

“Are you trying to say you believe that Abigail was in on the secret?” Will’s eyes turned slender in disdain.

“I see you learned her name, huh?”

Will’s mind wandered back through the hospital, down to Abigail’s room. Abigail on her hospital bed strapped to a ventilator, her frail body against the sickly white sheets of the hospital bed that made her look ghastly. He shook his head, he was back at the cabin. He was in denial of such a possibility.

“It can’t be her.” He was sure of it.

“We’ve been going door to door with interviews, and all the information we’ve gathered seems to point towards Garrett Jacob Hobbs and Abigail Hobbs. Sources say that the two often spent time with each other. Often at his cabin out hunting, the irony being that they were a “prime” example of the perfect father and daughter duo.”

“She would make both a good bait and protégé,” Will admittedly sighed, “but she was definitely not involved in Hobbs' hobby the way you believe she was. That’s something he enjoyed more in solitude.”

Will crouched down to get a better look at the blood stains on the old wood floor. He shined his flashlight over it and the light caught a piece of hair. It shined in a luminous red, it was curly. Will carefully picked it up with his gloved hand and inspected it closely in scrutiny.

“Somebody beat us to the scene” Will sighed.

“How’s that possible?! I swore I told them to guard the place until my arrival, to keep a tight surveillance! These local police are absolutely useless!” Crawford was almost red in fury.

"Obviously not tight enough if someone had managed to break in again, just like-"

"Freddie Lounds had." Crawford groaned.

"I'm going to need a moment here, to gather my analysis." Will fumbled with the corner up front on his jacket.

"Alright, don't take too long." Crawford left Will to his devices.

Will stood up more comfortably to explore the area. He walked around a bit before going back downstairs to the front door. The pendulum swung back and forth behind his shut eyes, glowing a bright orange. He opened them again.

He had been surveilling the public area looking for his next hunt. That's when she caught his eye. She had brunette hair that resembled that of a doe, and freckles across her face that resembled that of a fawn. Her blue eyes were lively and curious, shifting to take in the world. Her pale skin illuminated with the light, she was almost breathtaking. But not as much as his Abigail was. Like a true hunter he stalked from a distance, and for some time he learned of her patterns. He learned when she would be alone. Once he was sure he had her scheduled down he would strike. With calculated swiftness he would bring her down. Maybe soon he'd bring Abigail to the cabin with him, he'd teach her how to dismember the girl like he taught her with deer. This could be something he could enjoy with her, maybe it would lessen his drive at wanting to kill Abigail. The paternal love would grow in him as he would be proud to continue his work through Abigail. He could share that dark part of him with her, and maybe she had inherited the same darkness from him and would understand why he did what he did. He would honor every part of these girls, his does.

Will opened his eyes to find he was back on the second floor standing in front of the bloody pair of antlers. He went back down the old steps, and out the cabin. He walked straight to Jack brimming with the need to relate to him what he had seen. After a while they were interrupted by the forensic trio who had just arrived on scene.

"Hey, Will!" Beverly called out to Will as she approached them.

"Hello." Will was slightly peeved at being interrupted.

"What's up man?!" Zeller follows after Beverly, he reaches out a hand to pat Will's shoulder in friendly affection.

Will dodges Brian's hand. He made note not to stand too close to Zeller, he was a touchy, clingy guy.

"I'm doing fine." He takes out his glasses from his flannel pocket, slipping them over his eyes.

Jimmy arrives last. He is carrying a bulk of things, and a secondary case that almost seems to belong to Brian. He must have forgotten it, poor Jimmy.

"Let's go now! We have to investigate the scene, remember?" He hisses and smacks Brian.

He then shoves the second case into Brian's chest. With a grunt, Brian holds his case.

"Bye, Will!" His collar is yanked by Jimmy as he's dragged away.

Zeller was too friendly for his own good. Good thing he had Jimmy to keep him grounded. Will sighed deciding he had enough, he scampered off to recluse himself in Crawford's vehicle. He couldn't wait to go home.

—--Hubris—---

It was the first day back since the Hobbs incident. Over a few days the event had caught wind and spread like a wildfire. Will Graham had become a damn glorified hero, he had rescued Abigail Hobbs from death. He was welcomed with a round of applause. It hurt his ears as it sent a ringing through his head, it irritated him so much.

"Please stop that. STOP IT!" He said quietly at first but got louder at the end. The applause died quickly.

With a huff, he flicked off some of the lights. The projector roared to life. This was better, Will liked the quiet environment. He liked being able to be in control of what happens in the environment.

"The Minnesota Shrike, now identified as Garrett Jacob Hobbs. What exactly was the contributing factor that led to me catching him? It was the resignation letter he left behind. Can someone spot the clue within it?" He asked.

Multiple students raised their hands, sure that there was some sort of clue in the short letter. Will sighed. *This class is hopeless.* He ignored their hands as he rubbed his forehead with his fingers.

"There isn't any at all. He left a number and no address. It's as simple as that, nothing else. Finding that letter was a stroke of luck, the shrike wasn't as lucky."

Will had turned around staring at the gruesome scene on the projector. He slid back into the moment where he had entered finding Garrett Jacob Hobbs' lifeless body. Abigail had practically butchered him, the coppery smell of blood floated about the air. He remembers the anxiety and adrenaline he felt as he fell into helping keep Abigail alive with Hannibal's help. He let out a shaky breath as he gripped the wooden desk he leaned against. He brought himself into reality as he looked forward to the exit door.

"Garrett Jacob Hobbs is dead. He was killed by the very source that fueled his drive to kill. Abigail Hobbs, a teenage girl, brought an end to his terror. The price of her freedom, unfortunately, was putting her own life at risk. A solution to keep this story from inspiring others must be found.

It's already inspired another individual, enough that he copied him. How could a crime like this rouse someone to copy it? I want a paper on how something like this could inspire someone to recreate it, due this Friday. Class dismissed." Will busied himself with his routine, basically screaming to the lingering students who had questions to get lost.

The chitter chatter of a few students who were trying to quell up the courage to ask Will questions, dissipated immediately once the familiar sound of clicking heels entered the lecture hall. Will recognized the pair of heels as he looked up slightly; considering that he still didn't fully know Alana, he wasn't comfortable engaging eye contact. Alana Bloom stood in front of him, smiling, head slightly turned in curiosity.

"Hi." Will was more amicable than usual.

"How are you, Will? How has life been treating you?"

"You have no idea…life has been throwing some hard punches my way recently." He chuckled a bit defeated.

"I came to warn you about Crawford."

"Crawford? Is he something worth warning about?"

"Regarding your circumstances, he'd be worth warning you for. So prepare yourself he's on his way. Don't act too surprised, or too knowing. I'm pretty sure he can't smell fear-"

"Why hello, Jack." Will saw Crawford's sleek black pair of shoes behind Alana's.

Alana whipped around to face him.

"How was your first day back, Will? Everything according to plan?"

"No, they clapped for me. In all my years of teaching in this academy, I've never seen such inappropriate behavior." Will was very pissed off as he finished gathering up his bag.

"What you did, Will, was something worth being offered a commendation for. The board wants you back on the field-"

"Only if you want to say yes. It's all up to you." Interjected Alana.

"I *want* you to say *yes*. But in order to get back onto the field you'll need to have a psychological evaluation."

"Like, right, right now urgency, or?" Will looked extremely anxious at the sudden springing of an unplanned psych eval.

"Oh, no. Dr. Hannibal Lecter is going to evaluate you. Unlike with Alana, you two don't know each other quite well. Unless, you want Alana-"

"I don't want anyone in my head. Ever."

"Will, what you saw at the Hobbs' home is not something someone gets to see daily-" Alana seemed worried.

"I've seen plenty of crime scenes, I used to be a part of the homicide unit at the New Orleans police department." Will huffed.

"*Used to*. That's past tense, you got kicked off because you couldn't handle the pressure of going after the criminals. You'd crack and then have meltdowns. You were a huge liability to yourself and others. It wasn't till now that you actually have the drive to keep it together. You went in ready to stop Garrett Jacob Hobbs if you needed to. Abigail allowed you the privilege of not having to kill, but the passion is still there. You would have killed Garrett Jacob Hobbs."

"So, I don't even have to have a psych eval? Why even bother then-"

"It's so **I** can sleep at night. I can't send you out to the field not truly knowing whether or not you'd truly do well. I can't send you out to get hurt. I need my conscience to be free of guilt. But, first I need to know whether or not the Hobbs case really affected you. I heard you've spent many nights in Abigail Hobbs' hospital room. So tell me, Will, have you gotten too close?"

"I doubt therapy will ever have l-It's desired effect on me. I know all the tricks, all the loopholes, I highly doubt-"

"It's not about how it doesn't work on you. It's about me being able to sleep in peace. So you'll talk to Hannibal Lecter if you'd like to go back into the field. Or you stay hitched to your lecture stand." Barked Crawford.

"Will, I am sure that this is what you need. You need someone to relate to, to talk to, someone who was there. Both you and Hannibal can find a way, I'm sure of it." Alana tried to assure Will, she gave Crawford a dirty look.

Will shook his head and sighed. He grabbed his things, leaving the room. He'd think about it.

-----Hubris—---

Will had thought long and hard about it. He wanted to go back onto the field, he wanted to save more lives. That's what he repeatedly told himself as he dialed the number on the business card Alana had given to him. After a few rings the line picked up. A very familiar, rich accented voice spoke. As always it sent shivers down Will's spine.

"Greetings, this is Hannibal Lecter speaking. Who is this and how may I help you?"

FUCK. Will forgot that Hannibal no longer had a receptionist anymore.

"I'm Will-"

"Ah, Will Graham. I've been awaiting your call. What makes you grant me such pleasantries?"

"I wanted to schedule a time when you'd be able to give me a psych eval, Dr. Lecter."

"Hannibal is just fine, Will. I have an opening available for you today at 2 p.m, would that be alright?"

"Yes, that's alright-"

"I'll be awaiting your presence till then, Will. I would also like for you to know I have a 24 hour cancellation policy." Will gulped at Hannibal's words, he couldn't skip out then if he got too anxious.

"Yes, I understand. Thank you."

"It was a delight speaking to you. Goodbye, Will."

"Goodbye, Hannibal." Will couldn't help but smile a bit to himself in his car rearview mirror. He looked like a buffoon, his smile immediately fell as he flushed. He realized the call was still going so he hung up.

—---Hubris—---

Hannibal stamped Will's evaluation papers.

"Congratulations on passing the evaluation, you are functional and more or less sane."

Will's eyes widened a bit and his mouth slightly fell open.

"Did you just pass me? We haven't even-"

"Jack Crawford need not worry for you, you've passed. Now we can converse in peace now that we've solved the dilemma at hand."

"Jack is the only one here then who thinks I need therapy." Will huffs as he paces slowly on top of Hannibal's library semi-balcony.

"Yes, I believe that conventional therapy is not something that would help you. What you need is an escape from the dark places you find yourself when Jack places you there." Hannibal gazed up at Will, he had considered Will's words.

"When I go there, I don't come back empty handed. It's not a wasted effort." Retorted Will.

"Is what you have brought back this time a surrogate daughter?" Requited Hannibal. "Both you and I saved Abigail's life. She orphaned herself, but you still feel a sense of responsibility for her. A responsibility that does not lack emotional devoirs. Even if you have an empathy

disorder, it's not applicable to this type of situation." Hannibal busied himself organizing paperwork.

"Does that mean you feel the same way?" Will said without a beat. He peered down at Hannibal to gauge his reaction.

Hannibal immediately turned to look at Will, making eye contact with him. He held Will's gaze for a beat before answering.

"Yes. I feel the very same weight of obligation you feel, Will. I feel just as responsible for Abigail's life." Hannibal kept staring at Will, "I can find myself wondering what could have happened to Abigail, if not for you and I being there in that very moment."

Will finally breaks free from being under the pressure of Hannibal's gaze. It was bearable for a moment, but it still made him uncomfortable. *I guess I do have my limits to eye contact.*

"You know, Jack believes Abigail had a part in what her father would do."

"Does that make you angry? Her image, tarnished by Jack?"

"Does it make you upset?" Will reflects the question back.

"I find it quite overdone."

"I agree."

"It would be naïve to rule out the possibility entirely at the same time."

"That's not right."

"Jack is going to search for answers once she wakes, or he will send us in his stead."

"Is this therapy or a support group for fathers of orphaned teenage girls?"

"I want this to be whatever you need, Will." He looks back at Will, "But I would also like to say, you might be able to see the best of yourself, but you can't always see the worst in someone else."

"What are you trying to say-" before Will could finish the alarm he set so he could remind himself to escape from therapy on time through the room. It shrieked unpleasantly, Will flushed fiercely as he clicked it off.

"That has to be the first time a patient has ever set an alarm, so they could leave immediately." Hannibal chuckled as he slightly teased Will. It only caused Will to be more mortified.

"Goodbye, Hannibal."

"Goodbye, Will." Walking himself out at a brisk pace, Will hadn't waited for Hannibal to say anything else. He didn't want him to tag along to walk him to his car.

Will shot angrily at a practice target. He was frustrated at the inaccuracy of each shot. There would be more accuracies and less bullets if he could just get it right. He was frustrated after having to shoot 10 bullets, which kept slightly missing the most vital points. He yanked off the noise canceling headphones. He jumped surprised at the sound of Beverly's voice.

"Didn't think a professor like you would train in shooting."

"I wasn't always a professor, I was once out in the field as an officer."

"So you're jumping back into the saddle, kinda?"

"Yes, kinda. I just shot 10 bullets, for some reason I'm *kinda* missing all the vital points by a few centimeters. I need *less* bullets, more *accuracy* if I want to take anyone down."

"Zeller said it'd have been funny if he could have snapped a picture of Crawford's face when he saw Garrett Jacob Hobbs' body, and given it to you."

"Now that would have been funny, I might have hung it up." Will a small smile plastered onto his face as he chuckled.

Will placed the noise canceling headphones back on, Beverly copying his example did the same. Will grips the gun as his support hand bends a bit with the elbow facing downward and his other hand is fully extended. The gun was a bit closer to his face, the stance made Will a smaller target. The support arm helped pull rearwards, creating an isometric tension to manage the recoil. Will shoots 2 more shots, he yanks off the headphones frustrated and anxious. And maybe a little self-conscious as well.

"I thought you were an isosceles guy, didn't think you'd be a weaver, huh?"

"I got stabbed in the shoulder back when I was on duty, gave me a rotator cuff issue. It's the weaver stance or having pain rip through my shoulder. The isosceles stance requires two extended arms in front of me, I have difficulty raising and dropping my arm in a limited time. Reaching forward which is required by the isosceles stance hurts like hell." Will puts back on the headphones, falling back into the weaver stance.

He jolts and squirms when Beverly starts to squeeze his shoulder. He does his best to keep still and not overreact as Beverly starts to fix his stance, but he is ready to snap at her if she goes too far.

"Let's see, try this." Beverly backs up.

Will shoots a few more times this time the bullets hit even closer to the vital points.

"I doubt you've quit being a forensic lab rat to follow your secret passion at teaching guys like me to shoot?"

"Oh no, I enjoy being in my chilly lab, the dead bodies, you know the good stuff? I've been sent by Crawford to collect you. I gotta know, do you have a green thumb?"

----Hubris—-

"So why are you driving me down to the scene again?" Will fiddled with his coat pocket, he was very anxious. Afterall, he barely knew Beverly.

"I was on my way down there anyways. Usually Z and Jimmy catch a ride with me. But, for some reason today Jimmy insisted on driving Z down instead. Figured I could use some company, so that's where you come in." Beverly hummed and bobbing her head to the rock music on the radio.

"Alright." Will looked out the window, he didn't like the amount of unfamillar situations helping out Crawford had dragged him into. It was only a matter of time before all hell breaks loose again. He just didn't know what would be the trigger.

"So uh…used to work down at New Orleans huh? How was that?"

"The police chef knew me, he asked me if I wanted to get on board. Said i'd be a good cop and all. He helped me get into the police academy and I passed. I mean it was that or working on boat motors…with my dad." Will sighed.

"You don't seem to like your dad much."

"No, I don't like him at all."

----Hubris—-

Tw: Violence, Child abuse, blood

It was Will's 10th birthday. He was wondering the school halls. It's not like they wanted him there in class anyways. He was the new boy again. Children are ruthless, they immediately picked apart Will. They all could sense something was wrong with him. They all refused to play with "Will the freak" or "Silent Will". Will had started to talk more over the last two years, but he never felt like talking to anyone at school. The teachers no matter how hard he tried to please them, never quite liked him either. They didn't like Will's lack of engagement in eye contact. Or when he was lost in his own mind. His "weird " repetitive movements and his dancing fingers were a distraction always. They certainly didn't like whenever Will would interrupt the class by screaming, "It's too loud!", covering his ears as he would shake his head violently.

Will was a perceptive boy, he could understand everyone far more than anyone should be able to. Except, that meant no one ever felt like making friends with him. There was one teacher named Mrs. Harper, she had taken a glance at him once in the halls. Will's thin frame, wild and unbrushed curls that swept underneath his ears. The ratty thin sweater that had far too many holes to be considered a sweater anymore. She had called him to go to her class today, so he ceased his wandering. He finally heades down to her class.

"Will, do you know why i've asked you to come to my classroom?" Mrs. Harper asked.

Will shook his head no.

"I have a bunch of clothes my boys out grew, you look like you'd be fit to wear 'em. How about you peruse through 'em and pick whatever catches your fancy?" She pulled out two large bags of clothes.

Will nodded shyly, going through the bags.

He picked 3 outfits and another sweater that had almost perfectly matched his old one. His face lit up when he saw it, it was already undecidedly his favorite item. He immediately put it on but something poked his arm, Will pulled it out. It was a price tag, his eyes widened in horror and shame. Mrs. Harper had spent her money om him. He felt horrible that she had gone an extra mile for him.

"Will…it's ok. I saw it at the store and knew you'd like it. I dont mind spendin' a bit of money on somethin' I'd know you'd make use of." She patted his shoulder as she reached for the tag, yanking it off. She threw it away into the nearby trash can.

"I….I understand. T..Thank y..ou, M..Missus H..Harper." Will struggled with his speech since it had been in misuse often.

"You're welcome, Will." She gave him a soft smile.

Will blushed looking down at his feet playing with the pocket of the new sweater.

"I have one more surprise. A little birdy told me it was your birthday today! I brought you a cupcake." She handed him a small box with the cupcake inside.

Will took it into his hands, holding it with the utmost care. He peered down at the lavishly decorated sweet, a giant grin spread across his face. Something he hadn't done in awhile.

"M…Missus H..Harper, I r..really a..apr..pre..cia..ate t..the g..ifts." Will was grateful as he held the cupcake close to himself.

"It's no trouble, Will. You can go on home now, it's been 10 minutes since the last bell ran'." She grinned.

Will paled immediately. He had only 3 minutes to get home to help his dad out at the docks. He bolted out of the school. He kept running until his lungs were bursting and burning. He was careful not to shake the cupcake around. He burst through the door of the small home. His father sat waiting at the table for Will.

"Where were you, huh?! Answer me boy!" Will's father stood up sending back the chair he sat in crashing into a wall. He ran up to Will, looming over him. "Oh! Well would you looky here! You got a pretty cake here!" He ripped the box away from Will's hands, raising it just out of reach from his grasp.

"N...NO! I..IT'S M..MINE! M..Missus H..Harper g..gave i..it t..t..to m..me!" Will jumped up to grab it.

"You think you're too good to be my boy now, huh?! You want Missus Harper to be your mammy?! Your real mammy abandoned us! Missus Harper would never want you, she's

going to abandon you a again!" He tore open the box, dumping the cupcake onto the floor. He began to stomp on it with ease. The frosting splurted and covered his foot.

"N..NO..N..NO! S..ST...STOP I..IT!" Pleaded Will as he threw himself onto the floor to grab at the smushed cupcake.

His father kicked him and he went tumbling backwards. The frosting splattered all over his face as he bled from his cut lip.

"Happy Birthday, Will!" His father kept kicking, despite Will's cries and begging. He just wouldn't stop, by the end Will's voice had disappeared his throat raw from screaming. His face a mess of frosting and blood. His new sweater stained with dirt and boot marks, his hair was matted. His father out of breath wiped his frost covered foot on Will's sweater. He walked out slamming the door behind him. Will had to pick himself up and gather the pieces he had broken into. He bathed crying as he looked at his broken and battered body. The angry purple bruises were now turning into a sick yellow. He had to untangle his own matted hair. He hand washed his sweater, hoping it would be dry by tomorrow. He went to bed in silence, in defeat. His father didn't come back until the next morning.

When Will had gone to school the next day, everybody was staring at him. Will felt terrified and scared at all the looks, the teachers were talking in hushed voices. His classmates were afraid to even go near his vicinity. He just floated through the day until he had been pulled into the front office, his father waiting for him.

"Which one of y'all is Missus Harper-"

Before he could finish Mrs. Harper burst through the office door.

Needless to say Robert Graham had already packed everything in his truck, which wasn't much. He skipped town with Will in tow, Mrs. Harper had reported him to the police. Will grieved losing the only and short connection he had with Mrs. Harper. He wept quietly as he looked out the window of his father's pick up. He distracted himself with the outside view.

----Hubris—-

Will walked with Crawford through the foliage of plants in the forest.

"I passed the exam." Mumbled Will.

"What? Say it louder damn it!" Crawford barked.

"I passed the exam!" Will said loudly through clenched teeth.

"You were wrong then. About therapy not working on you."

"No, I was right. Hasn't worked on me. But, you can be guilt free about sending me into the field."

The two slide under the police tape. Will's breath hitched a bit in surprise.

"The killer made sure his garden was quite a ways off from the hiking trail."

"He couldn't have anyone finding his special garden."

"He even set up traps around."

"He was very set on no one finding it then." Will's eyes scanned the mushroom covered bodies that laid in shallow graves.

The forensic had already started working hard at dusting and collecting evidence from the bodies. Even Beverly had seemed a bit irked by the fungi rampid bodies.

"Nine bodies accounted for, all at different stages of decay. They are very fertilized." Jimmy stood up.

"This guy buried them in a high nutrient based compost. He was looking for results, he's definitely got them now." Beverly continued.

"By burying these people alive the killer was looking to keep these conditions, until you know, they died." Brian inserted.

"At least till they could no longer be identified after the fungi had ravaged away any distinctive appearances." Jimmy seemed amused.

"Get this, he was feeding them something!" Brian was now amused as well.

"These people, did they show signs of struggle? Were they restrained?" Will stared down at the bodies.

"Nope." Jimmy popped his 'p'.

"They had an air supply, this guy didn't care to provide quality air to these people. Which is interesting being that he wasn't very reckless with his work, he was very meticulous in fact." Beverly shook her head.

"He's the last one to ever be a simpleton." Sighed Will.

The trio deciding they've had enough scampered off with a few smart aleck comments like, "see any shiitake mushrooms", and "You think you could grow taller like Mario by eating one of these, Bev?".

"Guess this is your welcome back gift." Crawford walked off leaving Will to his own devices.

Will stood by himself for a while, observing the scene. He was carefully scanning and thinking at the same time. Slowly he began to lose himself in thought. He hadn't quite noticed his eyes shutting as the pendulum swung behind the darkness of his eyelids.

Will felt himself working backwards back to the beginning; the smell of the fresh soil and vegetation prompted his eyes to flutter open. Carrying a shovel began to bury each of his unbound victims in a shallow grave. They are all alive but will never wake up again. They don't know that they are going to die, and he doesn't think it really matters.

Suddenly Will's vision is ruined by a stag in place of a shallow grave. He kneels down in confusion peering closer. When the stag disappears, he lets out a yelp. He yelps again when the body of the victim in the grave becomes reanimated, grabbing Will's wrist.

"Let go! Let go!" Screamed Will panicking at the sudden touch. The grip softens and Will sends himself flying back into the trunk of a nearby tree.

"Don't touch him!" Yells a medical assistant who runs to assist the victim.

Will just looks wide-eyed in shock at the situation. *WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT??!!*

—-Hubris—-

"I'm pretty sure you should take back your approvable." Will slide the stamped document across Hannibal's bureau. He backed up almost daunted by the power the paper had over his ability to be perceived as sane. He nervously fumbled with the end of his coat, his other hand was inside of his coat pocket. He moved around his fingers in anxiousness.

"What happened, when you were out in the field?" Hannibal picked up the form briefly scanning over it and placing it back onto the bureau. He looked up at Will with a concerned face.

"I saw a stag."

"A stag? An association of some sort?"

"I don't know!" Will shook his head.

"Does Jack know you saw something?"

"He knows I'm slightly freaked out at being grabbed by one of the victims we thought was dead. I already hate being touched, being touched by a presumably dead person is far more worse."

"Will, this seems like a combination of anxiety and stress. I don't believe this is quite something worth mentioning to Jack. You are undoubtedly mixing your fears into an imago so you may cope with the non-existent fear. The stag is a representation of your possible failures and stress that have amounted to going back onto the field."

"I am not stressed out or scared!" Huffed Will as he shook his head in anger.

""Are you completely sure you are not denying yourself these emotions because you wish to delude yourself into believing you are capable of retaking the position you couldn't take before? Are you looking for a way to prove yourself, Will?"

“Nome, I ain’t tryin’ to prove anythin’, Dr. Lecter.” Before Will could realize his southern accent had slipped out in anger. He clamped a hand over his mouth.

Hannibal couldn’t be more amused. *I suppose I could stop poking so much fun at Will. I won’t mention his accent slip right at this moment. Another occasion perhaps.*

“The situation you experienced with Abigail and I, could arguably be a traumatizing memory for you. Or anyone, especially Abigail, being injured by her own father. As i’ve said before your behavior occasionally seems to be as a result of past traumatic child abuse and neglect. That also seems to me to have been committed specifically at your father’s hand. Do you see yourself in her? Does Garrett Jacob Hobbs remind you of your father in a certain way? Have you before ever seen yourself doing what she’s done to your own father?”

“Yes! Of course I've imagined doing something similar..” He raked his hands through his face clearly in distress at admitting such a thing. He couldn’t believe he’d even answered the question to begin with. *Why didn’t I just lie?*

“Certainly, it must be harder resisting the urge to want to be proud of Abigail, now that she has done exactly what you couldn’t do.” Hannibal’s gaze bore into Will’s skin, as much as those words burnt him, he couldn’t help but realize what Hannibal was saying was true. He was proud of Abigail. Will hesitated as he took into these new thoughts. As he came to terms with it fully did he slowly give a nod that turned more into a full-fledged nod in agreement.

Hannibal nodded back in agreement, and sighed deciding it was time to change the topic before they’ve crept too far into Will’s conscience. He wasn’t so sure he was ready to go that far and he was sure that Will would dislike it, possibly cutting off their link to each other. One thing Hannibal was sure of was that wouldn’t be enough to keep him away. Once he was interested in something he would take hold of it and wouldn’t let go until he exhausted it to its limits. He would eventually make his way into Will’s conscience, not yet, someday. “This gardener, why do you believe he’d leave the hands out? I don’t suppose he would be affectionate enough to hold their hands for no purpose.” Hannibal approached Will.

“No, no, he wouldn’t have such an esoteric design. He’s straight to the point, he was meticulous enough to line up the graves of his victims.”

“He was growing them, so they would bear him fruit.”

“The gardener wasn't quite good at cultivating. All of his crops died, save the one that managed to persevere.”

“You weren’t wrong with your initial idea, the victim died before they could reach the hospital. The thing is that I doubt they were ever crops to begin with. I feel like there has to be more, maybe like just being fertilizer. Specifically fostered for the surrounding fungi.” Will sat at the end of Hannibal’s bureau.

"The structure of a fungus mirrors that of the human brain, an intricate web of connections."

"Our gardener could be fascinated with the way these fungi can connect, unlike that of the human mind." Will and Hannibal lean towards each other, Hannibal catches Will's eyes.

"Yours can." A small smile creeps upon Hannibal's lips, his fangs jut out slightly.

Will blushes, feeling quite bashful. No one has ever complimented his mind, at least not as genuinely as Hannibal had.

"Mentally yes, physically no." Will laughs as he gives Hannibal a goofy grin.

Hannibal quickly backs up a bit from Will, he licks his lips contemplating what he would tell Will next. *Will Graham looks much more lively when he laughs.*

"A connection. Is that what your gardener desires?" Hannibal looks at Will straight in the eyes almost as if he was trying to insinuate something to Will. Something he wanted with him. Alas, poor Will wasn't able to pick up on that social cue.

"You're absolutely right…" Will looked deep in thought, he was somewhere else.

"Do you feel like you could relate to him? Are you seeking a connection as well?"

"I guess you could say I am looking to connect with Abigail." Will nodded.

"Could I possibly one day connect with you?" Coyly Hannibal looked over his paperwork.

"Hannibal, we've already been connected." Hannibal looked up from his papers a bit surprised in response to Will's words.

"I am very pleased to hear that, Will." Hannibal gives Will a dashing smile.

"Yeah-" Will's alarm goes off again.

Hannibal check's his watch.

"I see you've pushed it back by two minutes now." Hannibal chuckles at Will's behavior.

"I guess so." Will mumbles bashfully.

"I'll be awaiting until our next meeting, Will."

"Goodbye, Hannibal."

"Goodbye, Will."

This time Will allows Hannibal to walk him out the door.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for putting you through this 3

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